

# **Russian Old Believers' Heritage and Traditions in Romania – Bridging the Past and the Future**

**Cristina Elena Clopot**

**Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Heriot Watt University**

**School of Social Sciences, Department of Languages and Intercultural Studies**

**September 2017**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis focuses on the heritage and traditions of the Russian Old Believers community in Romania. The study begins with an examination of the limited recognition of the 19 officially recognised ethnic groups in the country. Analysed in connection with the history of Old Belief, the study then considers (a) the narratives developed around heritage, (b) the manner in which different forms of heritage are included in Old Believers' lives and traditions and (c) the representation of that heritage. The theoretical framework is underpinned by a multi-disciplinary structure that draws on heritage studies, anthropology, ethnology and folklore. Methodologically, the study was designed as an interpretive multi-sited ethnography that combines extensive fieldtrips, interviews, observations and archival material.

While acknowledging the challenges of UNESCO's conceptualisation of heritage, the thesis relies in part on the organisation's interpretation as a framework for analysis. The examination considers the representation of Old Believers in the media and in museums as well as the use of heritage and traditions in tourism activities. The data tracks the accelerated pace of change in the post-socialist period and the effects this brought on existing heritage processes. The relative success of revitalisation efforts is evaluated in parallel with the disruptions in lifestyle patterns by processes such as globalisation and migration. In conclusion, the study outlines the importance of both religious and secular heritage for identity-work and community-building.

*To my husband – my mast during stormy weather*

## **Acknowledgements**

To say that this PhD process has been transformative seems an understatement, it seems more adequate to compare my experience to that of a Phoenix. My initial thoughts and ideas have been transformed to the point that it seems I have emerged at the end of this long process a different person. My heartfelt gratitude goes to my two supervisors, Prof. Máiréad Nic Craith and Prof. Ullrich Kockel who have steered when I was lost, helped, listened, advised, supported and have generally been an inspiration throughout as supervisors and mentors. My life would have been richer just by meeting them outside the university, to know them as persons and academics was a double blessing.

I am also grateful to Heriot Watt University for supporting this project by offering access to resources and professional development courses, as well by offering me as a studentship, without which the completion of this would have been impossible. I would also like to thank Caroline Murray, our wonderful administrator, who has helped us all with administrative tasks. Gratefulness is also due to the Folklore Society as well which awarded me the Estella Cranziani Post-Graduate Bursary which supported my fieldwork expenses.

My gratitude goes to my husband as well who inspired this project, a member of the Old Believer community, who has inspired this thesis and has patiently accepted my long working days. A great owe of debt is due to his (and now mine as well) immediate and extended family, who have helped me with contacts, information, comments, thoughtful people whose views helped shape mine as well. I would also like to thank the Old Believers' representative organisation whose help has been instrumental, without their openness this process would have been more difficult.

There is a lot to say about the people met during fieldwork but due to ethical guidelines I will need keep this vague here. I have been lucky to meet people from different backgrounds and learn from them. I thank them all, from the youngest who have won my heart with their dedication to the oldest who have imparted with me part of their wisdom. Their patience, acceptance of an outsider, kind-hearted words and occasional housing that was offered at times without being asked for, have made this project possible.

Moreover, the caring words, encouragement unconditional support of my family throughout these three years are unquantifiable. My appreciation also goes to those who have pushed me to apply for this PhD, Adriana and Adrian, their excitement when I had announced my acceptance is still fresh in my mind. Last but not least, a debt of gratitude

is due to my fellow PhDs and friends (Alexandra, Emma, Ilgin, Mavis, Sara and Stacey), my friends from home (Ioana, Simona, Alisa and Aura) as well as staff colleagues (Katerina and Kerstin) whose ears were always open to hear of my successes and struggles.

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## 1. Introduction

Who are the Old Believers?<sup>1</sup> Although I cannot remember my first meeting with an Old Believer, I have a precise recollection of the key encounter behind my decision to carry out this research, as it has influenced both my personal and academic life. Media accounts of Lipovans have enticed my interest before, but my ideas about this ethnic community lacked depth. They were incomplete brushstrokes on a mental canvas of a world far away from my own, a Romanian living in an area without Old Believers. They were in a sense as superficial, I would later discover, as they are for most Romanians, fed by stereotypes, at times propagated by the media (Chapter 5). This was about to change in the winter of 2011, when I first set foot in a Lipovan Russians family's house. It was Christmas time and my soon-to-be-husband invited me to meet his family who lived in the northern side of the country. Several minutes after our arrival, his mother seemed apprehensive of my presence which both put me in an uncomfortable position and aroused my curiosity. I was to find out later that Lipovans should choose partners amongst their own community and 'mixed marriages'<sup>2</sup> are still frowned upon (Fenoghen, 2009). As things progressed, at first awkwardly, then more smoothly, in the following days I managed to catch a glimpse of their ways. Sometimes, a linguistic barrier seemed to be in place, as names of regular food products combined Romanian regionalisms and Russian words, which made me feel uneasy that I did not speak their 'language'. The family was, as I would later find out, one of the most conservative ones in the city. There, in their small front yard, with a glass of house beer<sup>3</sup> in front of us, we started the prolonged discussions that continued over the duration of this thesis. I rummaged amazed through centuries-old books preserved in the family, pictures of icons painted by my husband in the past, pictures from weddings and funerals.<sup>4</sup> It is safe to assume that I was mesmerised, drawn to this exoticism. Through this informal entrance to the field I began my journey to research this unique ethnic and religious group whose borders seemed so sharply traced and whose traditional 'roots' stand firmly in the

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<sup>1</sup> The Romanian name of the group is *Ruși Lipoveni* [Lipovan Russians]. Discussions over the appropriate name have taken place in the community, as some feel they should be named Russians only. In this thesis, I use the English name, the official Romanian name and the simple Lipovan shorthand alternatively.

<sup>2</sup> The concept of a mixed marriage is relative, here I take the emic view of a mixed marriage consisting of any union between an Old Believer and a non-Old Believer, irrespective of their religious denomination.

<sup>3</sup> House beer is a non-alcoholic drink traditionally prepared in the north of the country.

<sup>4</sup> Lipovan Russians, as well as Romanians, have the custom of taking pictures at funerals.

past. The Old Believers started as a religious group and, in some countries, they are still only considered a religious group. In Romania, however, they are officially registered as an ethnic group and they self-define as an ethnic group, one of the official ethnic groups recognised at state level (as discussed further in this chapter). While emphasising their religiosity, the group's secular traditions are considered in this thesis as well (such as the singing tradition discussed in chapter 8.5). In a sense, the idea behind the project has started along the lines of what researchers have described as salvaging anthropology, trying to document customs and traditions before they are gone. In time, however my view has evolved in a more refined project, as discussed below.

First, however, I should note that my interest echoes a fascination with Old Believers that has transgressed academic fields and geographic boundaries. Numerous creative voices have drawn inspiration from Old Believers over time. Video documentaries outlining their exoticism have sometimes presented them as closed communities in Canada<sup>5</sup>, America as well as in Russia and Romania. Old Believers have made their way in literature as well, in the works of writers such as Dostoyevsky (1955) or Tolstoy.<sup>6</sup> They have also been represented in Russian cinema, in productions such as *Raskol* (2011), or *Tsar* (2009). Further afield, Old Believers' chants find resonance in some of Shostakovich's music and Rimsky-Korsakov's opera, *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh*<sup>7</sup> (1905), is based on one of the foundational myths of Old Believers.

Moreover, the study of Old Belief has been as fruitful in academia within certain periods of time<sup>8</sup> and especially in areas with a significant population of Old Believers (as discussed in chapter 4.3). Systematic analysis of the Russian group's history has been one popular dimension of studies in English (Crummey, 1970; Robson, 1996; Michels and Nichols, 2009; Crummey, 2011). Others have carried out ethnographic studies published in English capturing the subtleties of Old Believers' way of life (Morris, 1991; Scheffel, 1991; Rogers, 2009) as discussed further in chapter 4.

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<sup>5</sup> For instance, Margaret Hixon (1981) produced a documentary of Oregon Old Believers as an educational anthropological resource.

<sup>6</sup> Such as *The Kreutzer Sonata*, quoted in Paert (2003).

<sup>7</sup> The legend of Kitezh/Kitej is one of the foundational myths discussed by Old Believers. It was a city that became invisible (in some variants by sinking in a lake) to protect its inhabitants against Tatars.

<sup>8</sup> The 1980s stand out as a period of great interest, with researchers such as Morris (1981), Scheffel (1988) or White Johnson (1983) and others producing dissertations and theses on Old Believers.

Twenty-seven years ago, Richard Morris, one of the prominent researchers studying Old Believers in America and Russia, pondered the future of this traditional community. He noted:

To the scholar it appears that the Old Belief is dying out, at least in its most austere and traditional form. At times, it is hard to see the Old Believers lasting another generation. But then a researcher at the beginning of the century might have predicted that they would not have lasted this long (Morris, 1990, p. 362).

Today, his argument is still relevant and new studies of Old Believers have been published recently (Aidarov, 2016). While Old Belief has been studied intensely, not all communities have benefited from the same exposure. Most of the studies in English and French focus on Old Believer groups from other countries and until recently, resources available in English about Romanian Old Believers are very sparse (an exception is the work of Naumescu, 2011). In Romania, there is a strong strand of research produced by ‘native’ scholars, who have actively engaged in researching their traditions and heritage. As these studies are mostly presented in Romanian or Russian, they are rarely available to the English-speaking world. For this reason, a project such as this thesis is timely. Both Western and Eastern scholarship have informed my research, including works in English, French and Romanian. This study (in English) is especially appropriate considering that Romania has accelerated the globalisation process following the 1989 revolution, affecting both the majority and minority groups in the country (Light, Young and Czepczynski, 2009). Analysing such a process in a period of transformation, within the above-mentioned international debates, has proved an interesting challenge.

In a time of growing intolerance towards differences, of walls to divide nations, and intentional destruction of traditional artefacts, heritage comes to the fore as a key area of research. To reflect on these complex phenomena by shifting the perspective towards an emic point of view thus seems fitting and can offer insights of relevance for international debates. The current project presents an analysis that is internally oriented, and is an ethnographic account of Old Believers’ heritage processes. It aims to contribute to our understanding of the role heritage plays in ethnic groups’ ways of life and question the sustainability of observed patterns. Moreover, it aims to add to the rich corpus of Old Believer studies in English from a Romanian perspective. Although Old Believers’

heritage in Romania has not yet been assigned a trademark of international value (either recognised as heritage of ‘outstanding universal value’<sup>9</sup> or as intangible cultural heritage – chapter 2.1), as I discuss later in this thesis I believe it is nonetheless relevant at a smaller scale and thus deserves recognition and safeguarding.<sup>10</sup> As Deacon *et al.* (2003, p. 12) signalled: ‘much intangible heritage is important at a community level, and this heritage in its entirety, not just that with broader appeal, should be appropriately safeguarded’. The same can be said, I believe, of other forms of heritage more generally.

As any other research project goes, in good academic fashion, two key questions have guided the development of this study and thesis:

1. What role does heritage play in Old Believers’ way of life?
  - a. How distinctive is Old Believers’ heritage?
  - b. What intangible heritage do Old Believers preserve and how?
  - c. Is the Russian language part of Old Believers’ intangible heritage and if so, how is it integrated in everyday life?
  - d. How is tangible heritage used in day to day life and what narratives are generated around such objects?
2. How is Old Believers’ heritage represented?
  - a. How do Old Believers represent themselves in the media? How are they represented?
  - b. How is heritage represented in exhibition settings (museums)? Are there differences between representations of Old Believers in official museums versus exhibitions organised by community members?
  - c. How is heritage used for touristic purposes? Does touristic activity influence heritage processes?

Initially, I had considered a second line of enquiry which focused on the question: ‘How are Old Believers safeguarding their heritage and projecting it into the future?’. Whereas some emerging ideas are included here towards responding to this question, it was not

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<sup>9</sup> As I discuss in Chapter 2, the notion ‘outstanding universal value’ is key for the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.

<sup>10</sup> Old Believers’ heritage has gained national and international recognition in other countries. UNESCO has included the Cultural Space and Oral Culture of the Semeiske Old Believers (Russia) on its intangible cultural heritage list. Estonia has also expressed interest at national level in its community of Old Believers.

possible within the confines of this thesis to fully address this question and there is a need for further data to be gathered and analysed in due course.

As the research questions highlight, this study involves a complex analysis of heritage processes that has led me to consider an equally complex interdisciplinary conceptual framework. The three main fields considered are heritage studies, anthropology and folklore, combined in a porous construct. These are infused by a subjective interpretation of both available theories and data, and the reasoning behind choosing each field is discussed further in chapter 2.

As the beginning of this chapter suggests, the framework for this study does not purport to employ the myth of a detached observer. Quite the contrary, the data presented here has been gained through laughter and tears, from living fully with Old Believers during fieldwork, as discussed in chapter 3. It is similarly decisively un-objective, a strong interpretive stream derived from the ideas of Clifford Geertz is carried throughout the pages. These being said, the chosen method, multi-sited ethnography, seems to follow quite naturally. The lived experience has been coupled with an analysis of secondary sources, mainly media items (journal, documentaries and television broadcasts). The structure of the thesis builds on the questions outlined above.

Thus, the remainder of this chapter will include some background considerations on ethnic groups in Romania and their rights, as outlined by existing legislation. Moreover, to position Old Believers' heritage it will consider the national heritage politics and legislative environment in Romania. It will also include some historical information to highlight the roots of the group and trace some long-spanning tendencies and some emerging ideas of the heritage narratives considered in the analysis.

The next two chapters consider the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the study. As the concept of heritage has been used in diverse ways by researchers I outline my interpretation of a more democratic notion of heritage, which somewhat contradicts current views. Moreover, chapter 2 considers a series of themes relevant to the study such as nostalgia, tradition or authenticity. Chapter 3 then proceeds with a detailed consideration of the methodology chosen for the study, briefly summed up as a multi-sited 'yo-yo' (Wulff, 2002) ethnography. It also includes ethical and data analysis considerations.

Having set the framework, the fourth chapter then provides background data for the case study. The chapter starts with a brief history of the group in Romania, before pondering on their existence in a wide-spread loosely-connected diaspora. The last section of this

chapter considers the valuable work of researchers that this study builds on and the implications of considering Old Belief as heritage.

The following chapters represent the core of the project, the data analysis. Chapter 5 presents an analysis of media representations, not only from ethnic media, but also from different national and local media. It highlights the discrepancy between the two and the often-stereotypical way Old Believers are represented in mainstream media. It also reflects on the relevance of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (Council of Europe, 2010) and its limited impact at local level.

The subsequent chapter (Chapter 6) begins the structural analysis of heritage processes, with a consideration of intangible heritage, expressed through rites of passage rituals as well as regular day to day practices based on the Old Believers' religious calendar and languages. This relates to the analysis put forward in section 6.2 of iconography, one of the key crafts necessary for the practice of Old Belief, whose current transformation brings both crises and opportunities.

Having opened with a discussion of intangible heritage and thus outlining the underpinning value-system of Old Believers, chapter 7 centres on their reflection in material life. The discussion dwells on items such as costumes and religious objects necessary for religious practice. Furthermore, it integrates secular expressions of ethnicity through material objects. The second part of the chapter then shifts the analysis towards representation and opens a discussion on representation in different museums across the country. It includes long-standing open-air museums, ethnographic museums as well as smaller localised projects. It also problematises the lack of an Old Believers' ethnically-curated museum.

Chapter 8 then closes the analysis with a discussion of heritage as a resource for tourism, reflecting on the way some communities have reinvented themselves through tourism. It also questions the sometimes-opportunistic way in which non-Old Believers use Old Believers' heritage. A discussion of singing groups is included here as well, which foregrounds the changes increased outsider attention brings to their practice.

The last chapter (chapter 9) provides some concluding thoughts and outlines some of the key ideas resulting from the analysis presented in chapters 5-8, with reference to the research questions. It also outlines the limitations of this study as well as opportunities for further development.



## 1.1 Of Roots and Resistance

To understand the beginnings of Old Belief, as Varona (2002) notes, the historian needs to consider the larger patterns in society and not only the schism. Old Belief's history is rooted in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, during a period known as 'The Time of Troubles' (Pascal, 1963). This period was marked by revolts against the boyars, invasions from the invading neighbour groups, such as Tatars, famine and death (Pascal, 1963). On this background, a movement for religious and moral recovery started to redeem the once-glorious Russian state. As the church had 'a role that extended to the least minutiae of daily affairs' (Paert, 2003, p. 13) this rendered effects at all levels of society. These ideas of reform were coupled with a movement of political centralisation, and monarchs attempted to subordinate the Church to the Monarchy (Druzhelyubov, 2007). The leader at that moment was Aleksey Mikhailovich (1629-1676), part of the famous Romanov dynasty, crowned in 1645 who was keen to increase its influence. Commenting on the effects of the religious schism, Pascal (1963) argued that following Nikon's actions religion became a political tool, guided by the administrative representative of the time. As the tsar was very young at the time of coronation (16 years old), to compensate for his lack of experience in worldly affairs, one of the key statesmen, boyar Boris Morozov, was appointed to supervise political affairs on behalf of the young ruler. Pascal (1963) argues that his failure to exercise his role as monarch at the political level led Aleksey Mikhailovich to focus his attention on religious matters. Irina Paert (2003) has noted that it is somewhat ironic that the most important religious revolt in Russian history had taken place during the reign of the most religious tsar.

It should be noted, however, that central authorities were not alone in promoting a reform of Russian Orthodoxy. Old Believers' religious leaders such as Ivan Neronov, Daniel, Avvakum, Loggin and Nikon had embarked on a similar quest (Druzhelyubov, 2007). The latter played a key role in the manner the events developed as he advanced to the top of the Church's administrative hierarchy, becoming Patriarch. As Patriarch, he could impose his 'grandiose notions of a universal Orthodox tsardom' (Lupinin, 1984, p. 133). From this powerful position, he started the process to re-align Russian and Byzantine Orthodoxy, an objective which included changes in both ritual and liturgical texts (Druzhelyubov, 2007). His project was also supported by the ambition to shift the centre of orthodoxy towards Moscow, the Third Rome (Lupinin, 1984, p. 109), thus centre of orthodoxy instead of Constantinople.

In 1654, the Council of the Russian Church took place when the tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich and Nikon formally introduced a series of structural changes to Russian Orthodoxy. At the beginning of the meeting, Nikon addressed the council outlining his view:

Since, therefore, the Orthodox Church has obtained perfection, not only in the good sense and piety of its dogmas, but also in the holy ecclesiastical things and liturgical ordo, it is proper for us also to root our innovation from all aspects of church life, since innovations are always the cause of ecclesiastical conflict and division (Subbotin quoted in Meyendorff, 1991, p. 43).

As Meyendorff (1991) has noted, opinions over the necessity of these changes are divided amongst theologians. What cannot easily be argued against is the widespread reaction of people: ‘What molded the Old Believers into a group was their uncompromising attitude toward the innovations of Patriarch Nikon and Nikon himself’ (Lupinin, 1984, p. 107). Indeed, any changes in form were deemed to hinder connections with the Divinity (Naumescu, 2010) and met with harsh opposition. Thus, the claims of authenticity that I discuss in this study as well, have a protracted history; although their strategic use has shifted over time, the root of most discussions goes back to this key moment.

Old Believers considered these developments as devil’s work, trying to interfere with the old order and ‘encapsulated their hatred of everything new and oppressive in Russian life in the apocalyptic symbol of Antichrist’ (Crummey, 1970, p. 219). Following Nikon’s decree representatives of the Church and administration sought several attempts to settle the situation and reach a resolution with the dissenters, but Old Believers rejected their attempts. After the Council held in 1666-7 the old books and rituals were officially condemned and a harsh regime of oppression started (Meyendorff, 1991). The resistance had grown so significantly, propagated through written and oral means (Lupinin, 1984), that the movement became dangerous and protesters were labelled ‘*raskolniki*’ (dissenters). A system of persecutions started, which included fines for wearing a beard, corporal punishments and executions. The original leaders of the movement, such as Avvakum, were reduced to silence by being tortured, exiled, or killed (Druzhelyubov, 2007).

Developing as a community during such troubled circumstances, marked by despair and confusion, influenced the evolution of Old Belief as a movement and ‘the social and geographical diversity of dissenters led to ideological divisions’ (Paert, 2003, p. 30). The

major delineation comes from their interpretation of these apocalyptic times. The *Bespopovtsy's* ('without priests') main tenet was that during such apocalyptic times no church order could be recognised any longer. Extreme measures, such as mass suicide, were registered within such factions, leading scholars to regard Old Belief as a sect. The priestly division, *Popovtsy*, however, held that 'the Reform did not mean that the Church had been forsaken by grace' (Paert, 2003, p. 32). This allowed them to continue to ordain priests whereas the priestless communities relied on knowledgeable elders for religious services<sup>11</sup>. Following the interpretations of local leaders, a number of distinct smaller groups was created such as *Pomortsy*, *Fedoseevtsy* or *Filipovtsy*. Robert Crummey discussed this heterogeneity:

On the surface, the movement – and even so vague a word may be too precise for accuracy – consisted of a myriad of large and small subsects which fought endless skirmishes over minuscule questions of ecclesiastical ritual (Crummey, 1970, p. xii).

Yet, as Crummey further signalled, there are unifying patterns as well such as resistance against the state. According to a classification dating from 1929, 11 categories of Old Believers group existed, each of them subdivided in more than 30 persuasions (Druzhelyubov, 2007) and the numbers of dissenters had risen by the 1917 Revolution to 20 million (Lee Silva, 2009).

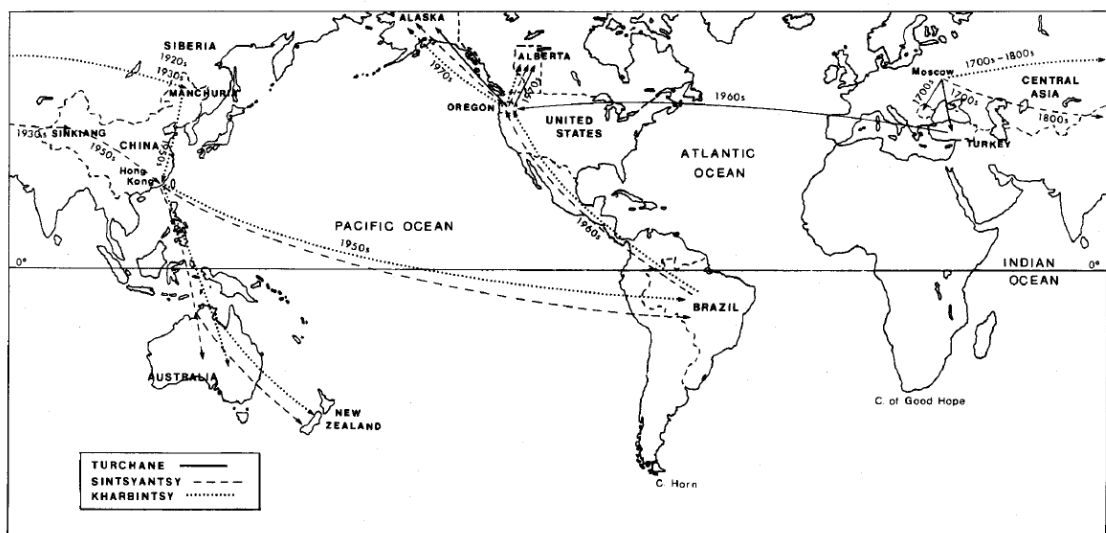
In response to these turbulent times, Old Believers left Russia spreading across the world. Different Old Believers groups exist today in different European countries such as Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania, as well as in Canada, the United States or Australia. Vascenco (2005) has traced three major migration zones with countries such as Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria and the Baltic Countries as part of the first zone. The second area reflects the South–East movement, and is formed by states such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Komi region, Chuvash and Mary El Republic. The third area

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<sup>11</sup> In the absence of a priest religious sacraments such as christenings, weddings and funerals could not be performed in their entirety as parts of these ceremonies are considered sacred and can only be performed by an anointed priest. Later, communities in the Baltic countries adapted these services and some perform christenings as well.

consists of territories situated further apart from Russia, such as Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States (Vascenco, 2005).

Movement towards the first-area countries was quite straightforward given their geographical proximity. The Baltic countries have an important population of Old Believers. Here, numbers registered in 1939 showed there were 100,000 Old Believers in Latvia, 80,000 in Lithuania and 9,000 in Estonia (Pentikäinen and Raudalainen, 1999b). Today, Vilnius hosts the High Council of Old Belief, an important institution for priestless Old Believers, while the first theological institute, the Institute of Old Believer Spirituality, is in Riga. In Estonia, the main centre of Old Belief is near Lake Peipsi, where several thousand people live in villages along the shore (Pentikäinen and Raudalainen, 1999b).



**Figure 1.1 Migration flows of Old Believers (Source: Dolitsky and Kuz'mina, 1986)**

The migration patterns towards the zones further afield are more intricate (see Figure 1.1). These are linked with a second significant historic event that drove a new wave of migration; the Russian revolution of 1917 and the subsequent change of political regime (Morris, 1999). The new communist atheist regime with its collectivisation practices brought new threats for the preservation of the old ways and prompted some groups of Old Believers, particularly those from Siberia, to leave for China. Here, two different groups were formed, *Kharbinskaya* (name derived from Kharbin city where they settled) and *Sintsyantsy* (Sinkiang province) (see for instance Dolitsky' and Kuz'mina, 1986). Some accounts about *Kharbinskaya* group mention Old Believers from Sakhalin island<sup>12</sup> as well (Nakamura, 1999). China's own revolution and the change to a communist regime, in

<sup>12</sup> This island's ownership has been disputed between Russia and Japan, but it is now considered Russian.

1949, further drove these communities away towards the American continent, where they lived for a brief period in Brazil (Morris, 1999). Along with Old Believers from Russia or Turkey, these Old Believers moved further north and eventually settled in cities and areas such as New York, New Jersey, Oregon, Kenai Peninsula in Alaska, or Alberta in Canada (see Scheffel, 1991; Morris, 1999 amongst others). Therefore, a wide diaspora of Old Believers exists at an international level as ‘different communities share common histories and struggles, language, material culture, and Old Rites of a bygone Russia’ (Lee Silva, 2009, p. 105).

## **1.2 Old Belief as an Orthodox Religion**

Continuity is essential for orthodoxy. It has been discussed in the anthropology of Christianity (Hann and Goltz, 2010), and as Naumescu observed it is important for Old Believers as well:

This constant need to adjust to particular historical circumstances while defending the old faith had two major effects on Old Believers’ communities. First, it produced an excessive ritualization of everyday life and an ideological separation of the sacred and profane, each with its corresponding semiotic forms (Rogers 2009). Second, it transformed Old Belief into a ‘textual community’, as the different Old Believer factions remained interconnected through their adherence to and use of pre-reformation church books (Naumescu, 2011, p. 61)

Following Naumescu, then, materiality and especially the reading of holy books is essential for the transmission of Old Belief, the act of reading itself being transformed in an act of devotion (a discussion developed further in chapter 4). As he argues: ‘Old Belief has established, legitimized, and maintained particular semiotic forms that mediate Old Believers’ relationship to the divine and produce their everyday millenarianism—the mixing of temporalities characteristic of an apocalyptic movement’ (Naumescu, 2011, p. 65).

Kenoticism (the ethic of sacrifice and humility) is an essential part of the Old Believers’ understanding of the world (Naumescu 2011, 2013) as well as their awareness of living post-apocalyptic times following the 17<sup>th</sup> century schism. As Priscilla Hunt notes kenotism is a type of spirituality ‘centered on the humanity of Christ’ (Hunt, 1991, p. 201), as

embodied in one of the most important texts of Old Believers, the memories of priest Avvakum (discussed further in chapter 5) who was incarcerated then killed for standing against Patriarch Nikon. As Hunt observes: ‘Russian tradition used this ideal of mutual identification conveyed by Christ’s kenosis to articulate a collective identity and sanction social and political institutions as vehicles of community’ (Hunt, 1991, pp. 201-202).

Moreover, Old Believers consider that life should be conducted as a ‘deferred apocalyptic expectation’ (Naumescu 2013, p. 92), following strict religious rules, in preparation for the second coming of Christ and eternal life. This ascetic and mystical understanding of life is not uncommon for other forms of orthodoxies, maybe somewhat more pronounced for Old Believers.

That Old Belief has traits similar with other forms of Orthodoxy is not striking as essentially Old Belief is an orthodox faith, thus sharing the doctrine and dogma with both Russian and Romanian orthodoxy. If one were to consider the significant traits of orthodoxy, centre-stage would be the belief in the Holy Trinity, formed by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as separate entities sharing the same divine essence. Moreover, a special characteristic of orthodoxy is the emphasis on the dual nature of Christ, his pre-existence as divine being first then as human through incarnation, which has significant implications for believers, opening the connections between the two worlds of people and divine beings (discussed further in chapter 6.2 in relation to materiality).

The spiritual experience of an orthodox believer is guided by the use of the religious calendar which marks saints’ days and special holidays across the year, with the focal point on the resurrection of Jesus, celebrated at Easter. A further important aspect is the second coming of Christ and the eternal life, an eschatological view that contrasts the transitory existence on earth with the *longue durée* of the eternal life following the imminent return of Christ, placing the accent on the latter.

Furthermore, irrespective of denomination, a primary role is taken by the Holy Tradition, the verbal counterpart of the written word (the Scripture), handed down from generation to generation (Ouspensky and Lossky, 1952). Orthodox tradition, as in the case of Old Belief emphasises continuity and immutability for other denominations as well (Hann and Goltz, 2010). A further major element of orthodoxy is formed by the *mysteries*, performed only by the priest. The liturgy which ‘serves both as a means to pious conduct and as an end, the experience of God (*theosis*)’ (Naumescu 2013, p. 106) and is central for the transmission of belief, is the major means to communicate such mysteries.

During this service a connection with the divine is opened through ‘*the mystery of the Eucharist*, the coincidence of transcendence and immanence or the ideal fusion of materiality and immateriality’ (Naumescu 2013, p. 107). As Ouspensky writes, the Eucharist, the regular sacrament which celebrates the Last supper (when believers are offered bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ) is the main sacrament of the faith, symbolising ‘the birth of a new life, an intimate union with God’ (Ouspensky, 1992[1980], p. 18). Other mysteries are communicated through the services for baptism and weddings for instance.

These being said, there are indeed differences between different branches of orthodoxy, but these appear in terms of ritual. The table below compares some of the characteristics of Old Belief, Russian and Romanian orthodoxy from this perspective.

<b>Old Belief</b>	<b>Russian Orthodoxy</b>	<b>Romanian Orthodoxy</b>
The theological base is the same for all three, the doctrine and the dogma are the same, the prayers are the same such as the main ones: the Holy Father prayer and the Nicene creed.		
The church structure and main architectural elements (e.g. iconostasis) are the same across the three forms of belief. Differences appear in the style of painting adopted, which have different influences.		
Uses the Julian calendar	Uses the Julian calendar	Uses the Gregorian calendar
Originally derived from Byzantine (Greek) orthodoxy, developed on its own until the reform in 1654	Continued to develop post-reform in the 17 <sup>th</sup> century,	Derived from Greek orthodoxy, still follows closely the Greek ritual
Services in Slavonic	Services in Slavonic or Russian	Services in Romanian
Icons follow the Byzantine style – can only be painted on wood	Icons on wood mainly but other materials can be used, greater flexibility in the interpretation of the ‘ <i>canon</i> ’ (rules for representation)	Icons follow the Greek style and can be painted on wood, glass, or other surfaces and a wide variety of styles exist

Christenings take place 8 days after birth	Christenings take place early in a child's life but not necessarily 8 days after birth	Christenings take place later on (usually during the first year of life).
Weddings only take place on Sundays after the regular service – weddings cannot take place on holidays and during fasts. The content of the service is essentially the same with other orthodox groups, with the emphasis placed on the crowing of the couple.	Weddings only take place on Sundays after the regular service – weddings cannot take place on holidays and during fasts. The content of the service is essentially the same with other orthodox groups, with the emphasis placed on the crowing of the couple.	Weddings can take place either on Saturday or Sunday, they are not connected to the regular services – weddings cannot take place on holidays and during fasts. The content of the service is essentially the same with other orthodox groups, with the emphasis placed on the crowing of the couple.
The Old Believers' church is segregated by gender, the women stand in the back of the church, the men in front and each have separate entrances.	Some churches follow the gender segregation rule with men and women sitting on opposite sides of the church (left-right rather than front-back for Old Believers)	Most churches are not segregated by gender any longer
Clothing: women must cover their heads, dress in long shirts and long skirts	Clothing: women must cover their heads, dress in long shirts and long skirts	Women are supposed to cover their heads but not all churches keep this rule, women can enter in trousers as well
Laymen take an active role during services through reading, reading is an act of piety itself Naumescu (2011, 2010)	Laymen do not participate in services through reading from holy texts	The priests and deacons are the only people reading from holy texts during services



Sign of the cross: the thumb, the ring finger and the little finger are joined together, the index and the middle finger are kept straight, with the middle finger slightly tilted – the joint fingers represent the Holy Trinity, the two straight ones the dual nature of Christ	Sign of the cross: the tips of the thumb, the index and middle finger are joined, the ring finger and the middle finger are pressed against the palm – the symbolism is the same the joint fingers symbolise the Holy Trinity	Sign of the cross: the tips of the thumb, the index and middle finger are joined, the ring finger and the middle finger are pressed against the palm – the symbolism is the same the joint fingers symbolise the Holy Trinity
Polyphonic singing ‘znameny’ chant by laymen – using a special notation system named ‘kruki’ (hooks) – which has 6 instead of 8 notes	Harmonised choral music based on modern musical notes	Harmonised singing by the dedicated choir based on modern musical notes
Only recognises the saints canonised before the reform	New saints were canonised post-Nikon	The saints celebrated each day of the year follow the Greek calendar thus variation from Russian saints exists
The name of Jesus is spelled with one ‘I’ - Isus	The name of Jesus is spelled with two ‘I’ - Iisus	The name of Jesus is spelled with two ‘I’ - Iisus
The evening Easter service takes place throughout the night  The solemn procession with the Burial Shroud on Holy Friday – believers circle the church clockwise	The evening Easter services finish around 2-3 a.m., the solemn procession with the Burial Shroud on Holy Friday – believers circle the church counterclockwise	The evening Easter service – finish around 3 a.m., the solemn procession with the Burial Shroud on Holy Friday – believers circle the church counterclockwise

Christmas – the main service is in the morning, only one carol exists and the group seeks the blessing of the priest before going carolling	The main Christmas service is in the evening (Vespers) in the eve of the feast	The main Christmas service is in the morning, many carols exist and children do not ask for the blessing of the priest
Uses only the 8-cornered cross	Uses either the 8-cornered cross or the 4-cornered cross	Uses only the 4-cornered cross

**Table 1.1 Comparison of Old Belief, Russian and Romanian Orthodoxy**

As table 1.1 suggests Old Belief does thus have certain differences from both Russian and Romanian orthodoxy and the implications of these distinctions will be discussed across this thesis. Essentially, however, the major tennets are the same, which eased the process of understanding data from fieldwork.

### **1.3 Minorities in Post-Socialist Romania**

This study is framed by a key moment in the recent history of Romania, the fall of the communist regime in 1989. The change of political regime and progression to a capitalist economy has elicited a series of profound transformations in all strands of life. The insecurity brought by the new faster pace of change has generated nostalgic feelings that are common across different nations in the region (Gille, 2010). The projected future of Romania was modelled, in principle, on Western values (Hann, 2002), yet the socialist legacy has not been so easy to discard. Even now, almost 30 years after, people are still discussing a transitional period, with a strong Socialist party continuously winning elections. While Romania is looking West in its aspirations, it falls short on many indicators, with its rampant corruption, paternalistic gendered society (Gal and Kligman, 2000), and with an emergent but still inefficient civil society (Verdery, 1996).

Another characteristic of the period is that the process of migration has re-emerged in post-socialist Romania, and has gradually intensified (Anghel and Horváth, 2009). This has produced changes in the ethnic structure of Romania's population, and has also affected its long-standing ethnic groups. Following the latest presidential election (2014) when votes from the sizeable diaspora have not only influenced but changed the result, the Government has opened a new Ministry dedicated to the relationship with diaspora.

The political environment's controversies are commonplace and at times augmented by another reality of today's situation. The disappearance of communism, with its emphasis on secularism, has resulted in a resurgence of religious activity (Maryniak, 2004). Researchers have analysed the religious revivals (Naumescu, 2010) as well as the religious pluralism (Gog, 2009) that characterise Romanian society today. Some have even argued that the interlocking relationship between politics and religion had prevented Romania from entering the European Union earlier than 2007 (Hann and Goltz, 2010). The arguments are enhanced by the fact that, unlike other countries, the Church is tax-exempt and has dedicated funds from the national budget. Such debates were clear in the recent presidential election when the current president, of German ethnic origin, met with strong resistance as a Protestant, different from the mainstream Romanian Orthodox Christianity. Several priests were actively and publicly supporting the opposing candidate, a Romanian Orthodox. On another occasion, a political dispute surfaced over the election of a First Minister. Both the general public and mass media exhibited some racist attitudes towards one of the proposed politicians, questioning both her gender and religion (she was a

Muslim). A more detailed discussion on the complexities of these transformation processes and the increasing influence of globalisation is beyond the scope of this study. Suffice it to say that these transformations have had effects not only on the majority population, but also on the ethnic groups present in Romania.

#### 1.4 Minorities in National Legislation

According to the 2011 national census, Romania has a total population of 20,121,600 people (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2011). Ethnic groups represent 10.4% of Romania's population and 19 major ethnicities are officially recognised. Table 1.2 offers a brief outline of ethnicities present in Romania that registered more than 10,000 people. As this table shows, the Hungarian and Roma ethnic groups are the largest while the remaining ethnic groups are considerably smaller.

Unit	Number	Percentage of Total Population
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>20,121,641</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
Romanian	16,792,868	83.46%
Hungarian	1,227,623	6.10%
Roma	621,573	3.09%
Ukrainians	50,920	0.25%
Germans	36,042	0.18%
Turks	27,698	0.14%
Lipovan Russians	23,487	0.12%
Tatars	20,282	0.10%

**Table 1.2 Ethnic groups with more than 20,000 people in Romania (Source: Institutul Național de Statistică, 2011)**

Current Romanian legislation includes provisions for minority groups (discussed further in chapters 4 and 5). This constitutes progress, as Ram noted at the beginning of her analysis of Romania's legislative environment, as 'the communist legacy Romania had to build on was one of forced assimilation and denial of minority rights' (Ram, 2009, p. 180). In many senses, the country has made considerable progress as legislation to advance minority rights is in place and Romania is now putatively a multicultural country. Long-standing ethnic groups have inhabited this geographical area long before the formation of the national state in 1918. As the analysis here will show, however, Romania seems to be an example which

shows the limits of multiculturalism (Hall, 1999; Harrison, 2010) rather than a success story. Nevertheless, year by year on December 18<sup>th</sup>, the National Day of Minorities is celebrated with large events, where many ethnic groups are included so that difference is diminished (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998).

The two largest major ethnic groups (Hungarian and Roma) continue to raise significant controversy in political and social life. The Hungarian group is often linked with nationalist and extremist actions (Sasse, 2009) in their quest to unite Transylvania with Hungary, thus recreating their imagined homeland. The second group, the Roma, has also been the subject of numerous international and national debates, similar to Traveller communities in other countries (Sasse, 2009). The German group, in comparison, has always been well-regarded and Romania takes great pride in its German heritage. The last presidential elections confirmed this as well, when while the president's religious affiliation was disputed, his German ancestry was accepted and only the most nationalist voices spoke against his ethnicity. The Lipovan Russians, the sixth largest ethnic group, thus needs to negotiate its position in this complex and complicated background which places different minorities, of both recent and older migration, on a hierarchy of tolerance. In addition, it needs to resist the strong anti-Russian opinions of many Romanians (Beaumont, 2008).

The national legislation that covers minorities' rights is harmonised with international acts such as the United Nations' (UN) International Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) or the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (UN, 1992). The Romanian constitution states that the state recognises and guarantees persons belonging to national minorities

*dreptul la păstrarea, la dezvoltarea și la exprimarea identităților lor etnice, culturale, lingvistice și religioase*

[their right to preserve, develop and express their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identities] (Guvernul României, 2011, Art. 6, Title I).

A nationalist undertone is present, however, with the mention that these actions should not discriminate against other Romanian citizens.

The Romanian Constitution also regulates the involvement of minorities in political activity. Organisations of smaller national minorities, who do not have the number of votes necessary to be represented in Parliament, are entitled to have one member in the Chamber

of Deputies (Guvernul României, 2011, Title III, Section 1). The largest minority party, often a source of disputes due to contentious public declarations, is the *Uniunea Democrată a Maghiarilor din România* (Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania). Due to frictions with the Hungarian minority - at times considered extremist - minority rights represent a constant arena of debate in Romania today. Nevertheless, during its activity, the Hungarian party has managed to advance the rights-development process in Parliament. One example that they impacted was the law governing the educational system which now includes passages on minority rights also (Parlamentul României, 2011). According to this legal document, minorities are entitled to elementary education in their maternal language. The only compulsory Romanian class is that of Romanian language and literature and schools can use dedicated textbooks, unless parents request regular Romanian language and literature textbooks. A Director of such a school should know the language of the minority represented, and any appointment can only be made after consultation with the parliamentary representative of the minority. The firm legislative environment offers protection, yet the impact on daily lives is limited, and ethnic groups' positions in society still reflect the margins – centre tension (Hall, 1999).

### **1.5 Heritage Politics and Legislation in Romania**

In terms of heritage, as an active member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO henceforth), Romania has signed and ratified both the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage<sup>13</sup> (UNESCO, 1972) and the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 2003). Up to date, the Romanian World Heritage List includes seven entries. The only natural heritage entry is the Danube Delta and neither the nomination dossier nor the current presentation on the UNESCO website (UNESCO, 2017a) include any references to cultural heritage, yet as discussed in chapter 8, the area has a distinctive cultural makeup worth mentioning. The cultural heritage properties on the list include a series of religious monuments: a chain of churches in Moldavia, the Monastery of Horezu, as well as the wooden churches of

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<sup>13</sup> Also known as the 1972 World Heritage Convention.

Maramureș. Apart from religious heritage, the Dacian<sup>14</sup> legacy of the country was celebrated through the inclusion of the Dacian Fortresses of the Orăștie Mountains. The only minority heritage items on the list are the villages with fortified churches in Transylvania and the historic churches of Sighișoara (both legacies of German heritage). The lack of presence of other ethnic heritage is conspicuous and points to the selectivity of the past in the heritage process of generating a national story, where other inheritances are left out but the German heritage fits comfortably.

In relation to its international activity, no heritage item has gained more attention until now than Roșia Montană, Transylvania (UNESCO, 2017b). In recent years, the site has garnered the attention of international media for ecological reasons and Europa Nostra placed it on the list of endangered sites in 2013 (Europa Nostra, 2013).<sup>15</sup> Disregarding the important heritage potential of the area, including the remains of a long Roman mining gallery, a Canadian corporation intended to mine for gold in the area. Their plans involved invasive extraction methods, including a significant amount of cyanide, that would have destroyed the vegetation of the area as well as the historic tunnels. Following a period of protracted negotiations and lobby activity of Roșia Montană Gold Corporation, massive protests have erupted in the country that gained significant international media coverage. The recently replaced First Minister, Dacian Cioloș, made the submission of the nomination dossier of Roșia Montană to UNESCO his final executive decision (Ministerul Culturii și Identității Naționale, 2017). Whereas the site is beyond the scope of this study, it is worth mentioning as it illustrates the politics of heritage at play in Romania, how the economic and political are entangled in any decision regarding heritage.

Whereas the World Heritage List includes some ethnic heritage, the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage comprises of elements that are specific to the majority population. The most recent nominations, traditional wall-carpet craftsmanship and men's '*colindat*' (carolling), are shared with the Republic of Moldova. On the other hand, the lads' dance,

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<sup>14</sup> The Dacians are the ancestors of Romanians, inhabitants of Dacia, an ancient kingdom whose land covered the current territory of Romania and Moldova. They were colonised by the Romans following the Dacian-Roman wars (101-102, 105-106 A.D.) (Waldman and Mason, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> Roșia Montană, an area of archaeological significance for its ancient mining galleries, forms 'the most extensive and most important mining system known from the Roman world' (UNESCO 2017b). The inclusion on UNESCO's list has been discussed several times as a strategy to protect the area yet up to December 2016 it the corporation's lobbying activities had prevented it (Pepine 2013).

the craftsmanship of Horezu ceramics, ‘*doina*’ (melancholic song) and the *Căluș* ritual are exclusively Romanian nominations. Yet, international recognition does not always lead to safeguarding of practices, as Kocó (2013) has shown, in the muddled post-socialist terrain, sometimes UNESCO’s efforts render unexpected results. Such is in the case of *Căluș* where the groups that practice the dance as ritual have no knowledge of the nomination, whereas opportunist organisations have diluted the cultural and symbolic meanings by transforming this ritual into a stage performance.

Moving from the international to the national legislative framework, as an active member of UNESCO, Romania has national legislation in place to protect heritage. The state legislative system for heritage includes a series of specialised laws and decisions enforced by the *Ministerul Culturii și Identității Naționale* (Ministry of Culture and National Identity). This apparatus includes a law for the protection of archaeological heritage, one for the classification and inventorying of historic monuments, and another for museums and mobile cultural heritage. The methodological norms for the classification of historic monuments seem in accord with the World Heritage convention criteria, incorporating details on age, frequency – uniqueness, architectural, artistic and urban value, as well as memorial and symbolic value. Based on these four parameters monuments can be inscribed as A- or B- level buildings. Operating in accord with Western views of heritage (as discussed in chapter 2), these processes rely on expert evaluation and to classify for consideration the most recent period considered is 1920-1960 (Ministerul Culturii și Identității Naționale, 2008). A law for the protection of intangible heritage exists as well. An index of heritage items and practices was established but it is not public. One of the latest changes in the Government has been the separation of religion from culture, the old *Ministerul Culturii și Cultelor* (Ministry of Culture and Cults) has suggestively been renamed the *Ministerul Culturii și Identității Naționale* (Ministry of Culture and National Identity) in January 2017. The nationalist objectives of the new government were confirmed by the insistence to celebrate ‘the National Culture’ day, a relatively low-profile day before<sup>16</sup>, as an important event (Ministerul Culturii și Identității Naționale, 2017). As Hann signalled in his analysis of anthropological studies of post-socialism:

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<sup>16</sup> The current majority party in the Government is socialist and such actions follow the increasingly nationalist rhetoric growing in different parts of Europe. The National Culture Day, which the Ministry press release mentions in reference to a law from 2010, is set on the birthday of the national poet, Mihai Eminescu.



Many postsocialist elites have drawn, implicitly or explicitly, on ideas of culture as an integrated whole to create boundaries of exclusion and, in the worst cases, to legitimize violence against those alleged to possess a different culture (Hann, 2002, p. 8).

Thus, the current environment weakens the possibilities for advancing concurrent interpretations, such as those of people on the margins. This being said, it follows quite naturally that a study like this one needs to be situated outside these frames.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has set the general background of this study. Following an introduction of the reasoning for choosing this topic, the chapter has outlined the specific questions considered as well as the structure of the thesis. The broad context Romania's ethnic composition has been discussed together with some introductory considerations of the country's attempts to harmonise and integrate international legislation in the field of heritage. As this section has shown there are significant barriers that ethnic groups within the country face in advancing their interests, which will be further analysed within chapters 4-8 of this thesis. First, however, to adequately situate the analysis in the interdisciplinary field of heritage studies, a review of the conceptual apparatus employed in this project is necessary.

## 2. Heritage and Tradition – Challenging Concepts

People often talk of ‘the heritage’ of this and that country, of this and that group and in a sense its use is surrounded by an aura of sacredness; yet its contents are not easily marked. Trying to define the contours of heritage generates feelings of uneasiness. It is precisely for this reason that this chapter aims to draw the boundaries of the heritage concept used here and its related concepts. As the heritage concept that this thesis employs stands outside conventional interpretations it is necessary to delineate the common use and my own understanding and use of the concept. First, however, I will address several of the challenges raised by academics in relation to the current interpretation of heritage, reflecting on definitions, timeframes, dominance/power and gender. A separate section will then reflect on the emic/etic categories used in this thesis before moving on to discussing the UNESCO framework.

The fuzziness of the boundaries of the notion of heritage have been problematised in scholarship before and heritage has been described as ‘an elastic concept’ (Nic Craith, 2012a, p. 11), or ‘highly flexible’ (Logan, Kockel and Nic Craith, 2016, p. 7) across different research traditions as well as geographical areas. To signal its variation, for instance, Máiréad Nic Craith (2007; 2012a) has developed in several instances analyses of the usage of the term in different languages, and its different connotations. To add to this analysis, the Romanian version of the term, ‘*patrimoniul*’, is similar to the French ‘*patrimoine*’, both conceptually and semantically (there is a certain implication of physicality). Others have drawn a connection with the legal usage of the term ‘inheritance’ to signal its link with the past (Bendix, 2009b; Vecco, 2010). However, heritage is more than a simple resource of the past. Indeed, it ‘says more about us than it does about past generations or what they’ve left behind’ (Hafstein, 2012, p. 512).

Analysing the roots of the concept of heritage, researchers often mention that our current understanding of what it means is rooted in the nationalistic movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Smith, 2006; Nic Craith, 2012a). Some venture to signal a much longer timeline, emphasising that ‘the notion of heritage is, first and foremost, a process’ (Harvey, 2001, p. 335). The development of our thinking of heritage is inescapably linked with the awareness that ‘heritage is a value-laden concept that can never assume a neutral ground of connotation’ (Kuutma, 2013a[2012], p. 21), it is highly selective, ‘assigning heritage value is thus a deeply subjective process’ (Deacon *et al.*, 2003, p. 3) and it also fluctuates over time (Bendix, 1999). Examining the process of defining heritage and the actors commonly

trusted to make such choices Laurajane Smith (2006) has proposed the notion of ‘authorised heritage discourses’ (AHD), which privileges the specialist, masculine voices in the field (Smith, 2008), at times disjointing from local ideas (Berliner, 2012).

Several researchers have stressed the processual nature of heritage, by using the term ‘heritagisation’ (Ruggles and Silverman, 2009; Silberman, 2016) or emphasising that it is constructed (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1995; Kuutma, 2009). Acknowledging that ‘cultural heritage does not exist, it is made’ (Bendix, 2009a), Smith defines it as a discursive practice (Smith, 2006; Smith, 2015). Heritagisation, Regina Bendix (2009a), reminds us, entails an inherent selection process; some ideas are carried forward and others are left behind (West, 2013) - hence such a process might become a source of conflict (Hafstein, 2012).

Although heritage might be interpreted at first thought as belonging exclusively to the past, nowadays researchers focus on the interplay of different temporalities:

From our contemporary perspective we interpret resources (both tangible and intangible) that are drawn from a perceived past in order to generate meanings in the present and for the future (Nic Craith and Kockel, 2016, p. 426).

There is a general upbeat discussion of heritage in international literature which describes it as a ‘dynamic social reference point and positive instrument for growth and change’ (ICOMOS, 1999). Although heritage is commonly defined as an economic resource (Bendix, 2008a; Bendix, 2009a; Watson and González-Rodríguez, 2015), researchers have cautioned against the simplistic nature of such general-order arguments (Noyes, 2011).

Whereas discussions that take place in international arenas emphasise heritage as a shared resource, researchers have criticised the fact that often the frame of reference in heritage studies is set at a national level: ‘most heritage work (critical or otherwise) has tended to reside within a national frame of reference, as the key arbiter of value and driver of AHD’ (Harvey, 2015, p. 579). Heritage is an influential process whose ‘construction and identification is always an act of politics and power’ (Kuutma, Seljamaa and Västriik, 2012, p. 10) and for a long time has been associated with national identity (Galaty, 2011) and advancing national interests (Logan, Langfield and Nic Craith, 2010) by weaving a coherent story of the past (Nic Craith, 2013a[2012]). Such narratives are based on the views of those ‘whose versions of history matter’ (Hall, 1999, p. 6). In this sense, as Bendix has signalled recourse to heritage simplifies:

The term heritage acts like a beautifying gloss, rendering the specificity of past political, economic and social experiences into a far less complex whole than what socio-historical scrutiny would reveal (Bendix, 1999, p. 38).

But imposing a particular perspective, often the dominant one, leaves some others outside and ‘those who cannot see themselves reflected in its mirror cannot properly belong’ (Hall, 1999, p. 4). Such communities that adhere to other heritage traditions, that root their senses of communal belonging outside of the state, can be overshadowed in this larger frame (Kurin, 2007). The efforts of smaller groups within a country are inhibited by the fact that the level of decision is often set at the national level as well:

the legal framework of protection for heritage, together with the language for assessing the value and level of heritage significance, remains wedded to the structures of the nation and the State (Harvey, 2015, p. 583).

In her analysis of how several states have represented their heritage in World Heritage nomination dossiers, Sophia Labadi (2007, p. 162) has observed they are homogenously represented by the ‘great men of history’ and women, indigenous groups and men with disabilities are left out. Ethnic minorities can be added to this list and as Harrison (2010, p. 178) has noted, such groups can be considered dangerous due to links with their countries of origin and ‘the state may perceive this as a threat to its ability to reproduce an image of itself as a nation’.

Whereas some states might have policies to encourage the expression of cultural diversity, such policies are questioned when they ‘intrude on the important things, such as the language of the schools and national identity’ (Rhum, 1996, p. 333). In certain situations, diversity is specifically sought to drive the opposite effect whereby ‘the proliferation of variation has the neutralizing effect of rendering difference (and conflict) inconsequential’ (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, p. 77). The limits of multiculturalist policies in regards to heritage (Harrison, 2010) and other domains (Modood, 2014) have been lamented in parallel with a discourse on the dangers of the homogenising effects of globalisation (UNESCO, 2005; Labadi and Long, 2010). Researchers have also questioned the universalising speech of global actors such as UNESCO (Noyes, 2011).

## 2.1 Emic and Etic Categories

In addition to the considerations included in the previous section, a discussion is due here on the conceptual framework for this thesis, particularly in relation to ‘etic’ and ‘emic’ categories, the first one belonging to the researcher, the second to the informants. As several researchers have noted, heritage is a ‘subjective’ concept (Harvey, 2008, p. 20) and researchers struggle over meanings in the ‘thoroughly fragmented reality of cultural heritage in the twenty-first century’ (Silberman, 2016, p. 30) and this is further complicated by the use of the concept in vernacular language. Equally challenging is the concept of ‘tradition’ (discussed as an analytical concept further in chapter 2.3) that my informants often used in its vernacular rather than academic sense, as an ‘emic’ category.

The notion of heritage was also used in ‘emic’ categories by Old Believers, such as in various institutional settings, either governmental or academic. For instance, the Departamentul de Relații Inter-etnice / [*Department for Inter-ethnic Relations*] within the Romanian Government regularly offers sponsorship for projects supporting the preservation of heritage of different communities and Old Believers have benefited from this funding. Another funding body, Asociația Fondului Cultural Național [*National Cultural Fund Association*] also regularly organises tenders focused on heritage activities, having sponsored during the years Old Believer project.

Moreover, the concept of heritage is not completely foreign to regular Old Believers either, as one Old Believer notes:

Innurile religioase, cultul arhaic al ortodocșilor de rit vechi, conservate mai bine de 1000 de ani, de importanță majoră pentru ortodoxie, pot fi încadrate cu ușurință în patrimoniul spiritual al Europei.

*[The religious hymns, the archaic cult of old-rite orthodox, preserved over 1000 years, of high importance for orthodoxy, can easily be placed in the spiritual **heritage** of Europe.]* (Condrat 2014, p. 11, my emphasis)

Articles in their ethnic media publication, *Zorile*, also discuss heritage:

Staroverii sunt adevărați custozi ai acestui mare patrimoniu cultural.

[*The starovery are the real custodians of this huge **cultural heritage**.*] (Beltrame 2011, p. 19, my emphasis)

Yet, the transfer between ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ categories is not as simple as it might seem and the uncritical adoption of the ‘emic’ is not fit for purpose here. Discussing the difference between the two concepts that are key to anthropology, Harris (1976, p. 340) observed: ‘The locus of emic events lies in the actor’s mind, (...) the locus of etic events lies in the behaviour stream’. Thus the categories of speech used by informants do not readily translate in the analysis. As Holy and Stuchlik (1981) note, the interpretation of actions and verbal statements of informants offer a glimpse into their lifeworlds that is imperfect, thus the anthropologist needs to consider the analytical model that would offer the correct interpretation of data, rather than fully reproducing the mental process of the informants. Dundes (1962, p. 96) for instance discusses of units of analysis as ‘utilitarian logical constructs of measure which, though admittedly relativistic and arbitrary, permit greater facility in the examination and comparison of the materials studied in the natural and social sciences’. These ‘abstractions of distinct entities’ (Dundes, 1962, p. 96) then need to be carefully considered in the development of each research project and this work presents a bridge between insider categories and my own interpretation of the concept of heritage and tradition (chapter 2.3). In this view, my role as researcher acts as a bridge, reconciling the insiders’ perspectives with external (academic) notions, as discussed further in relation to emic/etic in chapter 3 as ‘an analyst’s model, but one which is built up from principles derived from, rather than forced upon, the data’ (Barnard and Spencer, 2002, p. 182). As Barnard and Spencer (2002, p. 182) further note ‘analysis, even emic analysis, is the job of the observer’.

## **2.2 UNESCO’s Heritage Conceptualisation: Challenges and Opportunities**

Several key texts of UNESCO are considered in this section for their potential and limits to define the concept of heritage. While acknowledging the challenges of UNESCO’s conceptualisation, in particular the recent critiques of the ontological separation (e.g. Harrison, 2013) as well as the other critiques discussed hereafter, for the purposes of this thesis I use this general framework for my analysis, enriched with some analytical considerations (discussed in chapter 2.2).

The protection of heritage and diversity has become central to the work of UNESCO (Stoczkowski, 2009) and over time the organisation has drafted several legal instruments with powerful implications at international level. The definitions included in these varying instruments illustrate the evolution of the concept of heritage and mark a passage from an essentialist view of culture (Bortolotto, 2006; Bortolotto, 2007) towards a more nuanced and relativist one (Kuutma, 2013b), yet still outpaced by the dynamics of culture (Bendix, 2009b). In the process, the organisation has gained many critics, being accused of setting globalising standards (Harrison, 2015) while purportedly fighting globalisation's undesirable aspects (Labadi, 2010). In addition, human rights concerns were raised (Logan, 2007; Logan, 2012) as well as critiques of its inability to push the agenda of cultural rights further in spite of advocacy efforts for cultural diversity (Donders, 2010; UN Human Rights Council, 2011). Moreover, in line with views of heritage as a masculine field (Smith, 2008), feminist analyses have shown a bias against women in convention texts (Moghadam and Bagheritari, 2007), in registered practices and in organisations involved in the nomination and evaluation process (Cameron, 2016).

One of the key types of heritage discussed by UNESCO, of key interest for the thesis is that of intangible cultural heritage. The concept began to be contoured toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when awareness of the limitations of old focus on tangible heritage grew, as well as of the bias in representation of other areas, particularly in the eastern regions of the world where tangibility is not considered as meaningful (Vecco, 2010; Akagawa, 2015). An attempt towards enlarging the definition of heritage was made in 1989, when a Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore (UNESCO, 1989) was drafted, but fell short of expected results as it failed to protect the actors rather than the items (Blake, 2007; Nic Craith, 2008) and had a weak legal status (Deacon *et al.*, 2003). The mention of folklore, its long spanning connection with nationalism and its aura of backwardness (Hansen, 2016), also slowed down the influence of this instrument. The need for an instrument to protect immaterial aspects remained and the agenda was pushed forward by different influences, coming from Asian countries (Ahmad, 2006; Akagawa, 2015), indigenous groups (Harrison and Rose, 2010; Harrison, 2013) as well as the localised efforts to save the Jemaa El Fna market in Marrakech (Schmitt, 2008). In 2003, on the background of protracted intense debates, UNESCO presented the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003) (hereafter ICHC). The draft of this convention received 1,352 proposals of amendments, with more than 150

suggestions only for definitions (Rudolff, 2006). In the final text of the convention, intangible cultural heritage (henceforth ICH) is defined as follows:

The 'intangible cultural heritage' means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (UNESCO, 2003, Art. 2).

In this view, the immaterial, 'living heritage' (Kurin, 2007, p. 12) takes primacy over material manifestations which become secondary, as expressions of the former category (Munjeri, 2000). As Deacon *et al.* (2003) aptly observe, the newly-defined concept was needed to demarcate from the earlier use of folklore and inject the new form of heritage with a connotation of novelty as it 'draws on the past to inform the present: it is always a modern construct, however old its roots' (Deacon *et al.*, 2003, p. 16).

One of the key concepts left undefined is that of community, although the term is central to the convention (Blake, 2006). The ICHC aimed to create a bottom-up process, where an idealistic community has the responsibility to identify and evaluate practices, as well as to keep these active (Kurin, 2007). This reliance on internal valuation makes this form of heritage vulnerable (Deacon *et al.*, 2003). ICH's ability and inclination to travel across borders (Blake, 2007) further enhances its vulnerability. Moreover, the shallowly approached problem of ownership (Bendix, 2009b) has raised significant issues (Lixinski, 2014), as discussed in section 2.6. Although the ICHC mentions that different forms of heritage are considered only based on their compatibility with human rights, questions have been raised in this respect also (Logan, 2009; Logan, Langfield and Nic Craith, 2010; Silberman, 2012).

A further fundamental difference marked in the ICHC is the recognition of variation, which Bortolotto (2007) argues denotes a shift towards a processual approach that is focused on people (Bortolotto, 2006). This new definition allows change to be associated with heritage as practices accommodate to new environments (Logan, 2009). Yet, as Valdimar Hafstein



(2015) has forcefully argued, the effects are normative, and the accepted level of change is limited; disappearance is not tolerated.

By discarding the ‘outstanding universal value’ criterion used to evaluate tangible heritage and replacing it with representativity (Blake, 2007), the ranking of heritage items is removed. Heritage that has value for a particular community is appreciated, no matter how it fares on a global hierarchy. ICHC also attempts to shift the focus from authoritarian professional assessment to the community by empowering the latter (Deacon *et al.*, 2003). However, as many researchers have observed, by allowing only national governments to put forward nominations (Kuutma, 2012), this salutary change is curtailed. The inability to account for intra-national diversity (Labadi, 2010) only projects the power relations within the country (Kurin, 2007) at an international level and less influential and perhaps uncomfortable voices of minorities are silenced (Harrison, 2010).

The categories of intangible heritage included under the umbrella of this definition are:

- (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
- (b) performing arts;
- (c) social practices, rituals and festive events;
- (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- (e) traditional craftsmanship’ (UNESCO, 2003, Art. 2).

ICHC has tried to bring a new concept of heritage that moves beyond folklore, considered parochial and infused with romanticism (Hansen, 2016) and ‘often associated with non-industrial societies’ (Harrison and Rose, 2010, p. 242). However, the organisation has resolved to include the very items that have been the focus of long term study for folklorists, confirming the twinning of these disciplines (Kuutma, 2016) (discussed further in chapter 2.3).

Some researchers have criticised the inclusion of language as vehicle of transmission only rather than as a category of heritage (Nic Craith, 2008; Nic Craith, 2009). In this view, language is understood as a distinct category to be added to the list of intangible heritage, conferring a sense of identity for a group or a person. My research project is aligned with these critiques, and considers language as a category of heritage rather than merely an agent for transmission.

Critical voices, such as Richard Kurin, have expressed doubt in the efficacy of the convention:

The connections of ICH to the larger matrix of ecological, social, technological, economic and political relationships is too complex, too multi-faceted and nuanced to be reduced to the simple formula proposed by the 2003 treaty (Kurin, 2007, p. 18).

His assertion seems to be confirmed by the recent special collection of the *Journal of Folklore Research*, 'UNESCO on the Ground' which charts the unequal effects of the ICH designation at community level (Foster, 2015; Hafstein, 2015). Other views have described it as a 'metacultural' process (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004) as the ICH nomination triggers a second-order process and it generates ancillary items, such as lists (Smith, 2015), or material items such as recordings or images. Bendix recommends to treat this as a cultural process in itself as nominations generate an entire bureaucratic apparatus (Bendix, 2014). Another of the relevant early documents in the history of the organisation is the 1972 World Heritage Convention (WHC hereafter), when UNESCO provided a definition for cultural and natural heritage:

For the purposes of this Convention, the following shall be considered as 'cultural heritage':

*Monuments:* architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;

*Groups of buildings:* groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science' (UNESCO 1972, article 2, my emphasis).

Along the same lines, the convention mentions an additional category of 'natural heritage', which includes 'geological and physiographical formations' and 'natural sites' (UNESCO, 1972). Later, a third category of 'cultural landscapes' was added. Influenced by indigenous

worldviews (Harrison, 2013), this category combines the previous two, recognising the man's imprint upon a specific natural setting. On the basis of this convention, a list of universally recognised heritage sites was established (the World Heritage list).

Irrespective of category, decisions for inclusion are based on an assessment of the contested standard of 'outstanding universal value' (Labadi, 2007), predicated on the notion of authenticity (further problematised in section 2.4). Some of the key critical arguments raised against this concept are that it generates a hierarchy of values (Bortolotto, 2006) and that its conceptualisation is not clear (Cameron, 2016). At this stage, the emphasis was very much placed on tangible aspects (Nic Craith, 2008) whose objective evaluation of value can be assessed statistically. Heritage sites were viewed as '*lieux de memoire*', following Pierre Nora's concept, places generated by

moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded' (Nora, 1989, p. 12).

The reconstruction involved in conceptualising such heritage sites gains expressive form in Nora's disjunction between an organic, natural memory and the one materialised in increasing numbers of archives. Suggested here, as well, is the idea of selectivity in discerning what qualifies as heritage (Smith, 2006). Conceived within these parameters, as researchers observe, the gravitational pool of the WHC is directed towards the West, whose ideas have shaped this instrument.

Discussing the tangible and intangible distinction, Deacon *et al.* (2003) note that the separation of the two types is synthetic but it is needed to redress the scales influenced by the earlier convention. The conjunction of the two types of heritage had been stressed time and again (Munjeri, 2004), with the two types of heritage are in 'a symbiotic relationship' (Bouchenaki, 2003) or complementary (Nic Craith and Kockel, 2016). Smith (2015, p. 140) has recently argued that 'all heritage is intangible' and that separate treatment has negative effects and 'the wider political context within which the heritage item or event may sit becomes obscured or deemed irrelevant' (Smith, 2015, p. 139). Yet its use in current literature still prevails.

Whereas the organisation's apparatus has been severely critiqued, as outlined above, its conceptualisation of heritage through various legal instruments has greatly influenced

scholarship and is of relevance for my study as well, as it outlines the typologies of heritage considered in this study, as a lense through which to investigate the community.

### **2.3 Heritage and Tradition**

Moving from the international level to the European level, the definition of heritage has been further expanded in the Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society<sup>17</sup> (Council of Europe, 2005) which has shifted the attention towards social processes (Mydland and Grahn, 2012). The convention defines heritage as

a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time (Council of Europe, 2005, Art. 2.a.).

This European convention was recognised as a step forward in bringing more agents into heritage processes as it ‘embraces a multi-stakeholder and shared-responsibility approach to cultural heritage’ (Vrdoljak, 2016, p. 550). Vrdoljak recommends this convention as a model for UNESCO to reconsider its legislative apparatus as ‘this approach would enhance the promotion of cultural heritage in a more holistic fashion’ (Vrdoljak, 2016, p. 551) and encourage participation of small-scale actors. Moreover, it broadens the notion of heritage to ‘a broad, living heritage aligned with sense of place, landscape, sustainability and comprehensiveness, and context’ (Fairclough, 2009, p. 35). While engaging with international discussions, it is with this last document that this study has affinities, as outlined below.

While acknowledging the utility of international typologies, which are employed in my analysis, I consider definition of heritage used in such instruments vague. The notion of heritage employed in heritage studies lacks analytical clarity, as I view the use of a generic notion of ‘heritage’ too wide as it occludes its complex layering. Secondly, and in a different sense, it is too narrow, as it depends on a governing body, be it at national or international level to acknowledge something as heritage to confidently make claims about

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<sup>17</sup> Also known as the Faro Convention.

such cultural expression. As discussed in chapter 1.5 ethnic groups do not always gain such recognition. Further entanglement in this conundrum comes from the fact that there are different discussions of heritage as ‘object and action, product and process’ (Fairclough, 2009, p. 29). To account for these predicaments, however, I do not necessarily propose discarding the term, but seek to infuse further analytical clarity to the concept of heritage by considering ideas and concepts from connected disciplines.

One of the first issues I had considered in shaping my own interpretation was focusing on people, rather than objects, objectified representations of heritage. This is then aligned with what Graham Fairclough considers in relation to the definition of heritage included in the Faro Convention:

In its active sense, furthermore, heritage is not restricted to ‘official’ actions or laws, but includes the most basic and egalitarian processes of a person’s ‘simply’ being and/or becoming in the world (Fairclough, 2009, p. 29).

Conceptualised as a matter of simply existing in the world, this notion of ‘heritage as action’ (Fairclough, 2009, p. 30) is centred on people in a sense that goes further than the definition proposed in ICHC or WHC. The convention, quite ironically, proposes an artificial separation of heritage as tangible and intangible whereas many of the items included in the list are ‘largely drawn from traditions that emphasise an integrated approach to heritage, where heritage is seen as an aspect of everyday life (that is, as culture)’ (Harrison and Rose, 2010, p. 247). Likewise, in this sense, the concept of heritage espoused here is expanded from the extraordinary deemed worthy of inclusion in national and international registers to ‘things that were deemed marginal (the local, the typical, and the unregarded “ordinary” things we have inherited)’ (Fairclough, 2009, p. 35). In this view heritage is not a frozen inheritance, but a living expression of culture (Nic Craith, 2008) whose meanings (Smith, 2006) are reassessed routinely.

This study also goes against the grain by focusing on smaller-scale actors rather than the national frame discussed above (Harvey, 2015). The analysis is intently set at community level to analyse the complex manifestations of cultural inheritance (Bendix, 2009b) from an emic perspective. This way, the analysis expands beyond forms of heritage confirmed by top-down assessments of what counts as heritage based on AHD, to consider the point of view of community members.

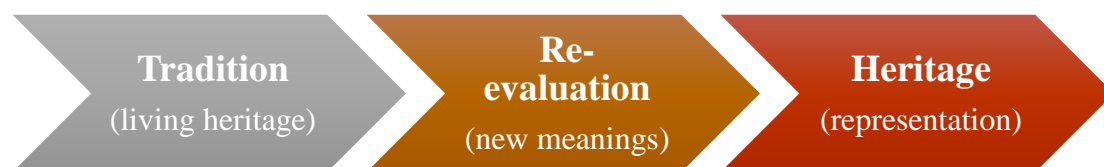
A secondary way the term heritage is used here is that of ‘an object’. In this sense, and borrowing from folklore, whose disciplinary utility I support (Hansen, 2016), heritage is paired with tradition as opposites. The two concepts, of tradition and heritage are related, they ‘intertwine in a synonymic relation; in many contexts, one might replace the other, if one holds recourse to the past as focal (Kuutma and Kästik, 2014, p. 284).

Considering the two concepts does not replicate, in my view, the dichotomy tangible and intangible heritage, which I duly agree are inextricably connected (Nic Craith and Kockel, 2016) and difficult to analyse separately (Smith, 2015). The two concepts’ different underpinnings support the separate treatment as they guide towards living practices and those that are no longer used routinely, but have been repurposed.

Thus, heritage as object is linked with an item taken out of practice or its original *milieu*, with a certain reinvention, as outlined by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett:

Heritage, for the sake of my argument, is the transvaluation of the obsolete, the mistaken, the outmoded, the dead, and the defunct. Heritage is created through a process of exhibition (as knowledge, as performance, as museum display). Exhibition endows heritage thus conceived with a second life (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1995, p. 369).

In this view, an item acquires the heritage label once it is no longer used in the original manner, “‘heritage’ is culture that has (been) dropped out of the process of tradition’ (Kockel, 2007b, pp. 20-21). During this re-evaluation process meanings are reconsidered and items become signs in a complex system of representation (Figure 2.1).



**Figure 2.1 From tradition to heritage**

At the other end of the spectrum and replacing the artificial concept of intangible heritage, is that of tradition, following the valuable and generous literature derived from folklore. Although ‘globalisation is supposed to have disposed of the folk once and for all’ (Kockel, 2008, p. 13) as recent scholarship shows (Blank and Howard, 2012; Hansen, 2016) folklore has not lost its relevance today. The key concept to consider here is that of tradition. In

the ICHC, tradition is a mere subcategory to be considered under the umbrella of the general concept of intangible heritage. In folklore, however, tradition is more than an objectified practice, it is an overarching concept to be considered in itself. It has been central to the study of folklore (Glassie, 1995; Noyes, 2009), refined following decades of conceptual debates. As Dorothy Noyes (2015, p. 299) has recently observed: ‘Despite emerging from political debate rather than academic discussion, these new policy objects bear a conspicuous resemblance to the stuff we know as folklore’. Moreover, setting the concept of intangible heritage and tradition side by side highlights obvious parallels. Folklorists have emphasised the importance of tradition bearers to safeguard practices and the ICHC places community at the heart of the convention. A further common thread between the two is the emphasis on transmission:

Traditions continue to exist only insofar as they are continually practiced and transmitted interpersonally, because artisanal and performance knowledge cannot be fully captured by codification or recording (Noyes, 2011, p. 42).

Other similarities can be drawn as well, both tradition as conceptualised in folklore and ICH entail change over time and adaptation to local environments. My argument for the use of the former then results from its conceptual strength brought by extended scholarship debates of its contents and effects, discussed in the next section.

Given the protracted debates on the concept of tradition (West, 2012), further considerations of this term were deemed necessary. In spite of numerous attacks over time it has preserved its relevance (Ben-Amos, 1984) today. As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1995) notes, the concept in itself was not debated in the early days of folklore; researchers were concerned with its manifestations, rather than the process through which a practice becomes traditional. Further along, debates around traditionalisation, the process of marking something as traditional by making recourse to the past (Hymes quoted in Eriksen, 2005), have become quite common (Gilman, 2004; Mould, 2005). Such discussions reflect ‘the legitimacy of identities derived from reflection on everyday historicity’ (Kockel, 2007b, p. 21). This is a ‘double-edged process’ as Cocq (2014, p. 94) shows in her study of the Sami’s community efforts for revitalisation, where it can foster belonging and self-definition (Jones, 2000) but where the ‘normative voice of tradition’ (Johnson, 2008, p. 254) enforces boundaries that can generate feelings of exclusion.

The roots of the concept of tradition stem from theology (Noyes, 2009) and similarities between its spiritual and secular understandings still exist. As theologians Ouspensky and Lossky (1952, p. 11) argued it ‘is one of those terms which, through being too rich in meanings, runs the risk of finally having none’. In a theological sense, writers argue that scripture and tradition are connected and they complement each other in that rituals are central to its transmission: ‘There is an essential link between religion and tradition, insofar as the latter is a manifestation of human social life’ (Geiselmann, 1966, p. 81). Even in its secular form, folklorists acknowledge that the concept has a ‘ritualistic connotation of idea and faith’ (Bronner, 1992, p. 36) and traditions are often discussed with reverence (Kuutma and Kästik, 2014).

As many of the writers on tradition have noted ‘the core meaning of *traditio* in classical Latin is “handing over” or “delivery”’ (Noyes, 2009, p. 234). Transmission is thus essential (Kockel, 2007a) and some have emphasised the physicality of the gesture (Bronner, 2012b): ‘The hand is important to tradition because of its capacity to grasp objects physically and intellectually and attach meanings to them’ (Bronner, 1992, p. 31). Bronner’s view echoes somewhat the notion of tradition as ‘a symbolic process: that “traditional” is not an objective property of phenomena but an assigned meaning’ (Handler and Linnekin, 1984, p. 286) Researchers have also emphasized the social nature of tradition:

tradition should be considered a social phenomenon, particularly if we proceed from an understanding that it has no formal existence outside human interpretation as a symbolic construction—not a given or defined organic entity, but an interpretation of the past in the present moment (Kuutma and Kästik, 2014, p. 285).

Most researchers now agree that tradition is not static and ‘cannot be defined in terms of boundedness, givenness, or essence’ (Handler and Linnekin, 1984, p. 274) but integrates both change and continuity (Sutton, 2008) and ‘includes the possibility of modifying what is being handed on, of appropriating it to a changed historical context’ (Kockel, 2007b, p. 21). Similarly, Henry Glassie (1995) had argued that in order to understand tradition one must analyse it in the temporal frame of the study. Thus, tradition



can be static, and it can be fluid; it can whirl in place, revolving through kaleidoscopic transformations, or it can strike helical, progressive, or retrograde tracks through time. (Glassie, 1995, p. 405)

What is at stake is not resisting change but ensuring that ‘it consists of skills and knowledge handed down in a continuous process and for a continuously meaningful purpose’ (Kockel, 2007b, p. 21). The number of consecutive transmission processes needed for a practice to be analysed as tradition is not set, some researchers consider at least two consecutive transmissions need to take place before something is labelled traditional (Gross, 1992) whereas others emphasise a longer timeframe. The emphasis on transmission outlines the link between temporal frames and as Gary West (2012, p. 66) has argued: ‘Tradition is a story, learned from the past, told in the present, looking to the future’.

Furthermore, Bronner and others have emphasised the responsibility of the receiver as ‘upon receiving a tradition, one feels part of something continuous, as if one were a link in a chain stretching back in time’ (Gross, 1992, p. 10). There is an implication, that if a tradition has been passed on it is valuable (Nic Craith, 2007) and ‘with it is the expectation that the thing will be cherished and preserved’ (Bronner, 2012a, p. 27). David Gross has made a distinction between oral and written transmission, arguing that there is less emotional engagement in written transmission. During oral transmission, ‘traditions are more likely to be picked up as tacit knowledge; they become an integral part of one’s “natural attitude”’ (Gross, 1992, p. 15).

Due to changing social circumstances, some traditions might become less visible. These are silenced traditions that could re-emerge later when conditions are more favourable:

A time comes when certain forms of tradition are felt to be superseded, no longer up to date. Then they are unthinking traditions, empty husks like the carapaces of dead insects, shells which no longer harbour any living creatures (Geiselman, 1966, p. 83).

Another idea to highlight here in relation to tradition is the dichotomy with the concept of modernity and heritage processes often fall within this trap ‘where a discourse of ‘tradition versus modernity’ presents tradition and heritage as synonyms’ (Kockel, 2007b, p. 27). The antithesis of the two concepts was labelled ‘temporal ideology’ by Dorothy Noyes

(2009, p. 239). Others have outlined the negative effects of such a view: ‘many folklorists take the tone that, in the modern push toward novelty, choosing tradition—a social connection hearkening back to the past—is a threatened human freedom’ (Bronner, 1992, p. 39).

This study is focused on process rather than on product (Kockel, 2008) and setting the emphasis on the mechanism allows me to consider the case without falling in the above dichotomies. This choice echoes one of the seven strands of tradition identified by Dan Ben-Amos (1984, p. 116) of ‘tradition as process’. This allows me to move away from contentious concepts such as ‘invented traditions’ (Hobsbawm, 1992) which in light of above-mentioned arguments are dismantled; as all traditions have been invented at some point (Kockel, 2016). Using such a definition of tradition, I am mindful of its temporality and the manner in which current circumstances shape people’s engagement with cultural practices. In this sense, the tradition that I engage here follows Ullrich Kockel’s concept of ‘reflexive tradition’ (Kockel, 2007b, p. 20): ‘Such reflexivity may simply reinterpret or clarify “tradition”, or it may consist in more complex refractions of actions, notions and representations’. In a similar vein, Handler and Linnekin had emphasised the use of reflexivity in the continuous interpretation of tradition: ‘Tradition is never wholly unselfconscious, nor is it ever wholly unrelated to the past’ (Handler and Linnekin, 1984, p. 285).

## **2.4 Heritage, Tradition and Authenticity**

As the sections above have shown, the concepts considered in this analysis are interrelated, and the concept considered in this section is not a separate entity either, as it is intertwined with both heritage and tradition. Authenticity ‘is strongly related to the identity of a place and to everyday cultural practices’ (Croes, Lee and Olson, 2013, p. 2) and its uses have relevance across many fields of practice, as they imbue claims with authority. Moreover, as Tim Winter has observed it ‘implies that narratives and places are consumed and interpreted by the audience in stable, universally shared ways’ (Winter, 2013, p. 176). For my purpose here, three fields will be considered, heritage, folklore and tourism, inter-linked fields for which particular views of authenticity have significant implications. Albeit important, as Lau has noted in many studies ‘the word authenticity is mostly taken for granted, and there is often a failure to realize that the word has a number of senses’ (Lau, 2010, p. 483).

Many of the authors within tourism studies align the beginning of the debates around authenticity with the quest of museum professionals for authentic artefacts, where curators 'serve as final links in the interpretive chain that underwrites the authentication and authority of museum displays' (Karp and Kratz, 2000, p. 202). In this sense, an item can have an intrinsic authenticity, a type of authenticity described as 'object authenticity'. This approach has been embraced by UNESCO and other organisations of heritage professionals such as the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), which have incorporated authenticity as a criterion in both the Venice Charter (ICOMOS, 1964) and later on in the WHC (UNESCO, 1972), which had defined heritage 'based on western models that privileged permanence and narrowly defined the categories of authenticity' (Ruggles and Silverman, 2009, p. 5). These ideas owe to the philosophical principles set out by John Ruskin in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Silverman, 2015). As Bortolotto observed this approach was 'bound tightly to an essentialised vision of culture shaped by the modernist association with a specific identity which is considered as being deeply rooted in the past' (Bortolotto, 2006, p. 41). Authenticity was considered an intrinsic feature of an object/building, whose quality could be assessed by trained professionals, later critiqued as AHD (Smith, 2006). With the Nara document (ICOMOS, 1994), which postulates a relativity of authenticity and links it with local values, the international community started to reconsider authenticity as a criterion for their assessment of heritage. This marked 'a doctrinal shift towards a greater recognition of regional and cultural diversity, as well as the associative values of heritage sites' (Cameron, 2008, p. 21). This view was influenced by certain events such as including on the World Heritage list the reconstructed Mostar bridge (Connor, 2016) or the bombed Warsaw city centre (Cameron, 2008). Arguments coming from Asian countries (Akagawa, 2015) where countries such as Japan have no equivalent word for authenticity (Winter, 2013) have also influenced this process. Following the 2003 convention, when authenticity was replaced by transmission (Blake, 2007), UNESCO seems to have steered clear of authenticity. However, Lixinski's (2014) analysis of the competing claims for the Dragon Boat Festival between South Korea and China showed how even in this malleable approach authenticity lingers in international discussions. Its presence in documents such as the Cultural Tourism Charter (ICOMOS, 1999) points towards this.

Authenticity remains tightly connected with the touristic experience (Harwood and El-Manstrly, 2012; Croes, Lee and Olson, 2013) and has financial implications (Chhabra,

Healy and Sills, 2003). Yet, as Waitt's analysis of The Rocks heritage site in Sydney, Australia, showed, 'although authenticity is used as a promotional device, what is "real" is open to interpretation' (Waitt, 2000, p. 836). Tourism literature has debated and proposed several interpretations of the concept, predicated on the idea that tourists seek authenticity in their travels. One major reference point is MacCannell's (1999) conception of 'staged authenticity', where tourists seeking authenticity are deceived by different illusory techniques that present an aestheticised environment to deceive the tourist into thinking he has entered the back stage. Another is Selwyn's (1996) distinction between a 'cool authenticity' derived from historic facts as opposed to a 'hot authenticity' fuelled by myths and invested with added emotional engagement. Social constructivists such as Cohen point towards a concept whose understanding is 'not given, but "negotiable"' (Cohen, 1985, p. 374). His suggestion is to use the idea of an 'emergent authenticity' (Cohen, 1985, p. 374) which implies that something spurious might in time be considered authentic. Wang further proposes moving away from both objectivism and social constructionism towards an 'existential authenticity' (Wang, 1999, p. 359) centred on the individual's experience rather than objects or processes. What these various theories share, irrespective of their underpinnings, is a belief in the possibility of authenticity. Some less optimistic researchers, however, have lost their faith in authenticity as 'the boundary between the real and contrived has become uncertain in the post-modern world of simulacra' (Henderson, 2003, p. 43). For AlSayyad the existence of places such as Las Vegas, which flaunt their falsity without shame, points to a bleak future for authenticity:

These examples clearly show how in today's world, where the global heritage industry reigns supreme, the notion of authenticity has sometimes been cut completely loose from its moorings: The image of the thing may now actually replace the thing itself (AlSayyad, 2013, p. 25).

This vision implies a certain shared understanding at the global level of authenticity, yet as other researchers have shown, the notion of authenticity cannot easily be simplified in 'blanket' statements:

Rather than being a definition ready-made for application, ‘authenticity’ is itself shaped, nuanced and often repeatedly contested in relation to the specific contingencies of practice that people face’ (Macdonald, 2013, p. 121).

Thus, its content is open to interpretation in local settings by different actors (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998) as well at different points in time, as ‘authenticity’s conceptual imprecision—its blurred, context-specific, often undefined (or indefinable) semantic boundaries’ (Theodossopoulos, 2013, p. 355) suggest its elasticity. As such, the implications of its use for the larger context (Silverman, 2015) are of particular importance or as Bendix pondered the questions to be considered are not “‘what is authenticity?’” but “‘who needs authenticity and why?’” and “‘how has authenticity been used?’” (Bendix, 1997, p. 21). Alivizatou (2012) follows this idea by analysing performances not in terms of authenticity but in their potential to illuminate identity building processes. This seems a fortuitous choice as in folklore as well as other fields of research, the answer has never been uniform. The researcher should discard efforts to reach such definitions as they lead to ‘a futile quest for representations and legitimations of authenticity’ (Bendix, 1992, p. 124). The questions raised in my thesis are based on this fluid contextual concept where ‘authenticity is always defined in the present’ (Handler and Linnekin, 1984, p. 286), aligned with those raised by Bendix.

## **2.5 Heritage and Nostalgia**

Apart from its connection with identity, heritage is often entangled with nostalgia in its orientation towards the past and sometimes objects act as mnemonic devices (Angé and Berliner, 2015). A form of nostalgia is implied both in international discourses that mourn the disappearance of cultural expressions (Unesco, 2005), as well as in the closer circles at community level (Cashman, 2006). Berliner (2012, p. 770) defines nostalgia as ‘a specific posture *vis-à-vis* the past seen as irreversible, a set of publicly displayed discourses, practices, and emotions where the ancient is somehow glorified’. Whereas the reference is to the past, as Sharon Macdonald (2013) observed its interpretation speaks for the present and the ‘politics of the future’ (Boyer, 2010, p. 25). In its current use, the concept is aligned with the diffuse disease that researchers note has generated the term, as a longing for something no longer present. Researchers note there are ‘a variety of nostalgic tones, with

multiple cognitive and emotional investments’ (Berliner, 2015, p. 20) and Boym differentiates between two different forms of nostalgia:

Restorative nostalgia stresses *nostos* and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home. Reflective nostalgia thrives in *algia*, the longing itself, and delays the homecoming-wistfully, ironically, desperately. Restorative nostalgia does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition. Reflective nostalgia dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity. Restorative nostalgia protects the absolute truth, while reflective nostalgia calls it into doubt (Boym, 2001, p. xviii).

As Berliner (2012) shows in his analysis of heritage processes at Luang Prabang (Lao PDR), such melancholic attachments have different vantage points, what other researchers have defined as ‘heteroglossic’ (Boyer, 2010, p. 19). Nostalgia is encouraged by a certain distancing from the past (Boym, 2007) and it can take the form of ‘exo-nostalgia’ a longing for a past one has not experienced (Berliner, 2012). Nostalgia infuses reconsiderations of heritage; a romantic view of the once great past often leads to negative feelings of loss. Nevertheless, it can also be interpreted positively when used strategically to contest the present and chart certain future orientations (Cashman, 2006).

The emotions triggered by nostalgia are linked with tourism motivations (Chhabra, Healy and Sills, 2003), driving people to seek experiences that help them reconnect with past ways of life (Wang, 1999). In this sense, nostalgia is often paired with authenticity, supporting my earlier assertion on the intertwining of concepts.

## **2.6 Heritage and Communities**

As mentioned earlier (section 2.1) a further problematic concept in relation to discussions of heritage and tradition is that of community. Many heritage scholars agree that there is an intimate link between heritage and communities as:

The attachment that communities feel for places, monuments, and objects—expressed through pilgrimage, religious devotion, story-telling, and tourism—can be a vital means of constructing group identity (Ruggles and Silverman, 2009, p. 8).

Yet, the positive notion of “community” is often mobilised as a catch phrase within cultural and other forms of public policy’ (Smith, 2015, p. 138) and this essentialist view often glosses over negative effects (Waterton and Smith, 2010).

The concept of community espoused in this thesis reflects Cohen’s (1985) suggestion of a symbolic construction based on common traits rather than a geographically-confined group of people, similar also to the notion of an ‘imagined community’ put forward by Benedict Anderson (2006[1983]). There are some caveats, however, as any discussion of a bounded community is considered now as problematic as discussion of a bounded culture is considered inappropriate in anthropology; and some researchers have even advocated for the removal of the term altogether (Ahmed and Fortier, 2003). Another important point is that in-group variation exists, as Kristin Kuutma (2012; 2013b) has repeatedly suggested. Communities, while ideally constituted along commonalities, ‘are not homogenous and neither is their heritage; disjunctions occur, and heritage-claims may not be consensual’ (Kuutma, 2012, p. 1). An insufficiently-problematized (Kuutma, 2013a[2012]) use of the concept of community thus ends up imposing certain ideas prevalent among researchers rather than reflecting the reality of the group, resulting in ‘misrecognition, discrimination, lowered self-esteem and lack of parity in any engagement with heritage’ (Waterton and Smith, 2010, p. 9). It also encourages hierarchies of importance, ‘for those communities not selected, the implication is that they are second-rate’ (Logan, 2009, p. 17). As William Logan further (2009) argued, this might also trigger changes within communities that follow suit to the successful stories promoted by the state.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

As this chapter shows the concept of heritage used in this thesis expands beyond the current use in literature, a view deemed necessary for the analysis of a case study that stands outside different frames. The use of heritage in research literature and in the larger context of international terminology used by UNESCO was considered to highlight the manner in which the concept has been expanded over time, as well as its shortcomings. A personal, broader interpretation of heritage has been defined here and several sub-themes of relevance have been considered as well, more specifically community, nostalgia, tradition and authenticity, contouring a multidisciplinary approach that draws from strong disciplinary traditions such as folklore and anthropology. Moreover, the chapter has shown

the inter-relatedness of these themes. The limits of the concept of community, the difficulties of reconciling multiple and even contradictory point of views within a study will be discussed further (see chapter 4, 5 and 8). With the conceptual apparatus examined, the next chapter outlines the necessary methodological considerations, to further mould my approach to the project.



### 3. Methodology

‘So what is it that you will do with these?’ people often asked in the field. The question would prompt an explanation of my research project and the different forms the data might take were met with puzzled looks. In a similar vein, Richard Morris (1981, p. 393) noted in Appendix 2 of his research thesis:

The nominal role and status of ‘a graduate student writing a dissertation’ conveyed little meaning to anyone in the community and it was usually met with a perplexed look that melted into something akin to a blank stare.

In attempts to explain I often deferred to the end-product ‘I will write a book’ which seemed to satisfy most people. The materiality of an end-product made the process worthwhile in their minds while in my thought process that result was very far along *en route*. Other more knowledgeable informants wanted to know the title of my thesis and again I felt inadequate as the title was the last thing to consider and change as the body of research is shaped and reshaped in the research process. It is thus the time here to reflect on this process, on my questions, the questions of informants and the design of this study.

In *Improvising Theory*, Cerwonka and Malkki (2007) chart the uneven process of an interdisciplinary ethnographic study, of the turns and gaps that make this process unlike any other in the social sciences. The first issue to consider is just how much creativity is required to develop a heritage study. Andrews (2010), charting her uneasiness in developing a ‘heritage ethnography’ method, notes that ‘a good methodology is one that allows you to tell your story, and tell it well’ (Bounhiss quoted in Andrews, 2010, p. 82). How to tell the story of Old Believers’ heritage and what should it include? There is, in my view, little need to defend that any research of this type requires a qualitative angle. As the end point is meant to reflect the complexity of the people and that detail that can only be provided by closeness, similar to Andrews:

rather than relying upon representative samples, statistical measurement or hypo-deductive proof, I examined relatively few samples in pursuit of intimacy, detail and nuance (Andrews, 2010, pp. 81-82).

The excellent works with Old Believers from Canada (White Johnson, 1982; Morris, 1991) and Russia (Rogers, 2009) offered rich comparative lenses, yet their focus was slightly different. There was a need then to consider what the object of my study would be. Another focus for my enquiry was derived from my uneasiness with definitions of heritage (chapter 2.3), when considering a small community such as that of the Old Believers. The absorption of heritage studies with bricks and stones in ‘authorised discourses’ (Smith, 2006) seemed all too restrictive, as it did not measure to the diversity and richness of cultural expressions. Opening the lens of enquiry can clean the muddiness of heritage that has not yet fully gained recognition at national or international level, but which is not less relevant:

Unofficial heritage also often refers to what, without a sense of threat or loss, we might refer to as ‘custom’ or ‘tradition’: a set of repetitive, entrenched, sometimes ritualised practices that link the values, beliefs and memories of communities in the present with those of the past (Harrison, 2013, p. 18).

From the start, I have considered a more flexible, presentist (Harvey, 2001) concept of heritage, as an ongoing process of meaning-making. These constructivist undertones are at the core of heritage discussions, as outlined earlier, when researchers frequently hold that to understand the underpinnings of heritage one must analyse it from the perspective of the community it operates in (Bouchenaki, 2003). This led me to anthropology and the first complementary partnership appeared. To study heritage anthropologically, as Machuca (2013, p. 58) reflects, means to account for a diversity of expressions of heritage:

The anthropological analysis that takes cultural heritage as a knowledge object and material for study is thus faced with the task of discerning meanings expressed in very diverse and expressive supports and practices: general representations of the cosmos and nature; performative forms such as rituals, dances and musicals in their fullest extent; gestural and linguistic or corporally represented expressions.

How are these meanings derived here then? They build on an interpretivist frame informed by the works of people such as Clifford Geertz (2000[1973]-a), Victor Turner (1969) and others. Moreover, the uncertainties around the concept of intangible heritage, as discussed

in the previous chapter, led me to consider a third field of research, folklore (Kuutma, 2016), with its established long-standing theoretical underpinnings for the concept of tradition. This eased my engagement in the field as well, since the vague notion of ‘intangible heritage’ was difficult to comprehend by informants, yet the concept of tradition (Gross, 1992) was easily understood and people discussed it regularly. As Waterton and Watson (2015, p. 22) reflect: ‘as ever with heritage, there is much to be learned from its connections with other disciplines in the social sciences’. Thus, the project blends heritage studies, anthropology and folklore in its analytical framework, yet derives its empirical richness from ethnography.

### **3.1 The ‘Webs’ of Heritage**

The interpretive frame for the project thus draws from Geertz’s conceptualisation of both culture and fieldwork but adapted to reflect up-to-date understandings (Cerwonka and Malkki, 2007). It attempts to build a ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 2000[1973]-b, p. 6). Rooted in symbolic action, culture thus gains a semiotic meaning; it is a matter of the researcher’s ability to document and interpret these expressions (Geertz, 2000[1973]-b). This form of analysis goes beyond pure description as its name might suggest, and strives to answer to the question ‘why’. Following Ryle (cited in Geertz, 2000[1973]-b, p. 6), such an analysis would allow the researcher to separate an involuntary ‘twitch’ from a ‘wink’, a deliberate meaningful gesture driven by a cause. Thus, description in Geertz’s conception, only serves as a starting point, to set out in detail the context of events and actions. Upon this first basic layer, the researcher then sets to interpret the significant occurrences by registering participants’ interpretations, the second layer of interpretation. The third layer of interpretation then belongs to the researcher herself who draws links between interpretations to uncover the hidden ‘symbolic system’, which makes people act in certain ways. A dance on a stage thus speaks for more than the moment and becomes a reflection of the overarching processes the community is undergoing, enmeshed in local and global processes.

Some reworking of the original ideas is necessary, as Cerwonka (2007) asserts, the field had moved on since the time of Geertz and notions of bounded cultures are no longer plausible today. In agreement with her, I believe Geertz’s view can be expanded to reflect the wider understanding of interconnections and flexible borders. The main point considered, mentioned by Bendix with reference to UNESCO’s conventions as well, is that

culture is changing, and that previous documents should be adjusted accordingly, ‘based on the recognition that culture is forever flexible and its material expressions are but fleeting evidence of human creativity’ (Bendix, 2009b, p. 182).

Yet Geertz’s understanding of culture still raises some valid points, such as the fact that aside from being public, it is ‘local’, a product of a certain society with its own fabric of meanings constructing the ‘webs of significance’ (Geertz, 2000[1973]-b, p. 5). For the American anthropologist, the role of the researcher is to tackle the same big concepts researched before, such as power, beauty, and prestige and so on, but through a ‘microscopic’ approach. By placing a focus on a particular context, he argues, they drop the capital letter; they become ‘homely’ (Geertz, 2000[1973]-b, p. 21). In a similar vein, the heritage that I analyse here is intimately connected with the community. Geertz cautioned that generalisations are dangerous; the microscopic account of a village life does not reflect any grand idea in a simplified, localised manner. However, some degree of generalisation is allowed as ‘small facts speak to large issues, winks to epistemology’ (Geertz, 2000[1973]-b, p. 23). As Rogers (2004, pp. 38-39) explained of his study in the small town of Sepych:

I do not claim that Sepych is ‘representative’ of anything—least of all ‘Russian culture’—in a part-for-whole sense. Rather, the utility of Sepych lies in the fact that it is a point at which several very large-scale processes have converged on the terrain of moral practice and personhood.

In a similar manner, the Old Believers’ heritage processes outlined here are a reflection, inherently biased as outlined below, of my own understanding of the Old Believers in a limited segment of time and space where larger processes converge with those at community level (Massey, 1994).

### **3.2 The Ethnographic Research Design**

Geertz (2000[1973]-b, p. 10) argued that ‘doing ethnography is like reading an old manuscript’, poorly preserved, where a lot of information is either faded or missing. It is in this manner that I have perceived this research process, based on ethnography. Or, to follow the less literary, more scientific wording of Creswell (2006, p. 70), ethnography is suitable ‘if the needs are to describe how a cultural group works and to explore the beliefs,

language, behaviours, and issues such as power, resistance and dominance’. Considering the declared pursuit of achieving intimacy, ethnography appeared as an appropriate method to discover the inner workings of heritage processes in the Old Believers’ community. Yet, as ethnography has been subjected to reformulations over time and has recently been used in other research areas outside anthropology (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Blommaert, Dong and Jie, 2010), it is necessary to present its characteristics as developed in this study.

In terms of data collection, ethnography usually involves the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts – in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 3).

In this sense, my fieldwork fits the description put forward here, yet there is an uneasiness to claim that this is a regular ethnography due to the specific research design outlined below. This research project does not develop an ethnography following the guidelines of prolonged continuous immersion in the field as it has become somewhat standard in anthropology. The methodological approach to conducting fieldwork in this thesis has been guided by Wulff’s ‘yo-yo’ method (Wulff, 2002). To accommodate my position as research student in a UK institution with fieldwork in a place separated by 1,500 miles, the data collection has been divided in several well-planned visits to the field, spanning from two weeks to three months. Careful planning has allowed me to engage in each of the proposed locations in an intensive manner during these visits. Immersion in the classical sense was not achieved in this project nor was it aimed for. Rather, I have tried to reach a middle ground, getting the best results possible from what Ulf Hannerz (2006, p. 34) calls anthropology ‘by appointment’:

In contrast, we now hear of ‘anthropology by appointment’ – with some irony or self-irony no doubt intended, yet referring to the reality that often enough modern life generally, although not least in studying up or sideways, there may be less to

participate in and observe fruitfully even if we had total access, but also that access to people, to informants, is in fact often limited, regulated and timed.

To follow up his argument, I have focused on the fact that anthropology is mainly about relationships rather than places (Hannerz, 2006), and with modern means of communication, such relationships can be developed and maintained even from afar (Wulff, 2002), as I explain below. Indeed, at the end of this process, I am still connected with key informants (Wulff, 2002; Okely, 2012; Bernard, 2013) in various ways. The interconnected nature of today's life makes separation difficult (Cerwonka, 2007) and in a sense, I have not left the field behind (Nic Craith and Hill, 2015).

Another key characteristic of this research project is that it was designed as a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 2010; Marcus, 2011), a type of study that has become increasingly popular today. A study of heritage in a community lends itself to a multi-sited approach to capture the intricate foreground and background in as much detail as possible, and to account for group diversity. As Kuutma (2013b, p. 11) argues, such a study enables the researcher to gain deeper understanding of the situation:

An anthropological approach advocates an investigation that utilises different perspectives, so that it could contribute to our understanding of the social world by complicating simplicities.

As Falzon (2009, p. 2) argues, moves in the field can either be geographical or conceptual 'by means of techniques of juxtaposition of data'. My project has involved the former, movements across space, most of the time.

One of the key tools of an ethnographic study is participant observation and this has been extensively used in this study. Participant observation entails, as Bernard (2013) notes, a commitment of the researcher to get involved in different activities. It is 'about stalking culture in the wild—establishing rapport and learning to act so that people go about their business as usual when you show up' (Bernard, 2013, p. 344). Academics have conceptualised different forms of participant observation, based on researcher's engagement, as complete participant, participant observer, or complete observer (Bernard 2013). Instances where I would be a complete observer have proved to be uncomfortable for my informants and most often I have taken the participant observer position. The

researcher identity had become akin to a second skin, ever present in my interactions in the field. Attempts to slip into less immersive roles were met with rejection. Outlining different types of ethnographies, Van Mannen describes the confessional style as ‘a they-made-me-do-it character’ ‘in which certain non-negotiable demands are made by the natives, the refusal of which would mean instant exile’ (Van Mannen, 2011, p. 78), a view that echoes my experiences in the field. From the early stages of the study, Judith Okely’s (2012, p. 77) vision of participant observation as ‘shared action’ seemed a better strategy to minimise researcher’s impact on the situation and informed my actions in the field, as ‘the detached observer may be *more* likely to transform contexts’ (2012, p. 77, original emphasis). To build stronger relations with the informants I have taken different roles following the idea that ‘participation, however incompetent, can be interpreted as respect’ (Okely, 2012, p. 77). Similar to Morris (1981), I have taken as often as possible active roles which have allowed me to build rapport and make connections. During the two iconography workshops, for instance, I helped the organisers with domestic and logistic tasks. In the process, I had become attached to the participants in the same manner as the teachers and staff, transgressing the researcher boundary and connecting with them as a fellow human being. On another occasion, at a festival I helped one of the teams and became an unofficial team member. This participation, while taxing for my body in the harsh summer heat, was rewarding in terms of relationships built and helped me gain access to the inner workings of such an event beyond that of a mere participant.

In various engagements in the field, I have also tried to carefully assess knowledge gained through other senses apart from sight (Luhmann, 2010). Conceding that ethnographic methods rely too heavily on sight, to the detriment of other sense, I tried to enhance my experience in the field by recording information from other senses as well. The observation of rituals such as church services has proven that these are not only visual experiences but also distinct aural ones, with sounds enhancing the complexity of the events, and the smell from the numerous candles and incense adding another layer. The worlds of my informants were characterised by particular sounds and smells as well as sights, and during fieldwork they have become a common vocabulary for me as well.

Throughout my fieldwork, I have kept regular fieldnotes to record engagements in the field. This is another tool specific to anthropology, sometimes seen as the hallmark of an anthropologist (Jackson, 1990). The use of fieldnotes allowed me to keep detailed presentations of events witnessed in the field, and to make sense of the learning process

(Blommaert, Dong and Jie, 2010). The particularities of this project have made this aspect of the process especially difficult. A similar point was raised by Lee Silva in her study where ‘the notebook was more of a barrier than a helpful recording device’ (Lee Silva, 2009, p. 20). In many of my encounters I have felt the same. As explained in this chapter, the nature of encounters was very close, which meant that people felt that they could look in my notebook and rejecting their attempts to see what I was writing offended them. An informant, upon taking the notebook out in one of my discussions asked why I needed to write, and when I mentioned I would forget otherwise, the informant promptly offered to repeat as many times as I needed! I have resolved in these instances to make use of extensive notes written at night, in the mornings, or whenever there was one free moment. Other times, such as at Easter, after three services that lasted most of the night, from 11 p.m. to 10 a.m. the next day (chapter 6.1.4), I was too exhausted to write them immediately. In these instances, my notes were written retrospectively, and their recording thus depends on the fallibility of my memory (Fabian, 2010). Akin to Lee Silva (2009), I have felt towards the end of my first session that I had improved my memorising skills in the process. At one point, I described my mind like a ‘human tape machine’ to a friend. However, this was not always the case. In more detached settings, where there was no need for me to be continuously in close connection to a person that would hover over my notebook, I have managed to keep it with me and take notes as things happened. In a future research project, I will consider a digital solution to process the information easier. The secondary tool used here has been the interview. Researchers point out that using both techniques is useful as ‘the data from each can be used to illuminate the other’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 102). The types of interviews considered for this research were ethnographic and formal interviews. The latter have been less prominent, with only eight engagements of more formalised semi-structured interviews. Most instances conformed to the disorganisation of common interactions:

often containing contradictions and statements that are made off the top of one’s head, with people shifting topics and getting lost in details, losing the line of their argument, not finding the exact words for what they wish to say, and with silences, hesitations, pauses (Blommaert, Dong and Jie, 2010, p. 47).



Fieldwork has included different opportunities to have numerous such interactions, echoing Rogers' (2004, p. 13) work with Old Believers in Sepych, Russia that contained 'hundreds of semi-formal interviews, unanticipated interactions, and chance encounters'. Appreciating the total number of encounters that have taken place during an ethnography is not possible, sometimes a two-sentence interaction can be more revealing than a one hour interview. The data presented here thus results from a myriad of in-depth or more superficial discussion conducted with people in diverse backgrounds, at iconography workshops, at services, in rituals, at festivals, at choir practices, or simply in homes across the two areas.

This set of data has been corroborated here with some secondary sources such as archival material, flyers and media products. The largest collection of secondary data has included around 110 editions of *Zorile* magazine (from 2005 to 2016), the internal community journal. I have decided to dedicate a separate chapter to media as it is illustrative of the issue of representation discussed here and it is linked with the findings in other chapters as well. The media chapter (chapter 5) also includes, apart from community publications, external publications, hours of interviews and documentaries watched live on television (TV) or retrospectively online. Upon request, the National Institute of Statistics of Romania (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2011) has provided me with detailed census data. The exploration of these data is secondary here to that obtained from primary data, and some only feature as contextual information.

### **3.3 The Field**

One of the most difficult parts of such a project is to define the 'field', especially given how volatile the definition has become (Bastos, 2010). As Amit (2000) argues in the meandering complexities of social aspects of everyday life the field is an abstraction, constructed by the researcher 'prised apart from all the other possibilities for contextualisation to which its constituent relationships and activities could be referred' (Vered, 2000, p. 6). Or, following Hirvi (2012, p. 25): 'I conceptualise the field as being made up of people and their practices, material objects and social sites'. As such, my field had a physical existence, discussed below, but it also had a second extension in the virtual world, where I connected with people through social media, mainly Facebook. I also followed the news appearances or online recordings of television shows they had appeared in, shifting the emphasis from physical to virtual presence (Nic Craith and Hill, 2015).

As mentioned earlier, in my effort to capture the diversity of heritage practices within this community I have chosen a multi-sited approach (Marcus, 2011). The field sites selected for this study were both urban and rural, situated in the two geographical centres with a significant number of Old Believers. The original locations included a village and a city in both areas, locations chosen based on their representativeness and significance. Yet, later, my neatly-planned four-location field was dismantled. Following topics and people rather than places I have visited more locations than originally planned. As qualitative research is often subject to unforeseen occurrences, the research design has entailed flexibility from the start. Being *disponible* as Okely (2010; 2012) recommends has allowed me to follow my intuition in the field and take advantage of chance encounters for gaining knowledge (Hannerz, 2006). Some of these resulted from the above-mentioned flexibility, when one informant called and told me they would go to a nearby village with some work and asked if I wanted to join. Such unplanned activities often resulted in rewarding experiences, not only from the perspective of tightening connections but also in terms of data. One such chance encounter allowed me to witness the wedding discussed in chapter 6.1.2.

The overall process thus included eight months of interrupted visits in the field during 2014 and 2015. Two extended 3-month visits took place in the summer of 2014 and 2015, July – September. The rest of the visits were spread here and there in small stints to cover major holidays across the years such as Easter, Christmas and New Year. Having established rapport with most people I have often encountered during my visits kind people who allowed me to use a couch or an extra bed for a short period of time. On some occasions, I have shared the room with their children, making it quite difficult to separate my own space. This, however, has yielded a close relationship with the family and enhanced the sense of intimacy.

Academics such as Nic Craith and Hill (2015, p. 55, original emphasis) argue for a move from ‘being *there*’ to ‘*being there*’ to follow the current developments of informants’ lives that increasingly include digital communication. This can be easily achieved as researchers have begun to discuss more extensively, how digital media allow for a different participation today than in the past, albeit with limitations in terms of information gained (Hirvi, 2012). Anthropology has proved to be a flexible field and its ‘strength has tended to come from its capacity to learn, understand and adapt to the living patterns and communicative choices of its participants’ (Nic Craith and Hill, 2015, p. 54). In a limited capacity then, during my absence from being ‘there’, in the field, I have kept myself

informed with what is going on in the community, to some extent through social media. This was achieved through different means, by online chats with informants/friends and less digital-intensive phone calls with informants/members of the extended family. Platforms like Facebook are part and parcel of my informants' everyday life now and this has allowed me to connect with people in the field as well as, retrospectively, to maintain such connections. Moreover, during the last three years I have used different digital tracking tools such as Google Alerts, Talkwalker and Mention. Each of these have alerted me to news articles, new videos uploaded on television channels pages and other sources that that had appeared online. These digital tools rely on search by keywords, and in this case, I have included key words such as 'Lipovans' 'Lipovan Russian' or 'Old Belief'. Moreover, while this project makes little mention of this, I have begun to gather a large dataset of emerging archives on social media. Due to the constraints of size of this thesis, and necessary additional theoretical lenses to interpret such data, I have not used this material here.

### **3.4 The 'Informant'**

No formalised categories of sampling were considered for this project, as discussions of sampling in anthropology are not appropriate. My engagements in the field included people of different ages and social roles within their respective groups: community leaders, local administration leaders, teachers, villagers, city dwellers, to name just a few. Taking heed of the above-mentioned need to observe a variety of instances, the focus has been on observing complexity to build a comprehensive representation of heritage. The contexts observed have included the representative organisation's events, rituals, dances and festivals, workshops, dinners and lunches, museums and touristic activities. The data considered has resulted from both formal settings as well as informal social activities. The question of access, of particular relevance for ethnography, has to be considered here as well. As a first step in my fieldwork, I arranged a meeting with the leaders of CRLR<sup>18</sup> and explained my project, enlisting their help in reaching out to the different communities. This help, in terms of connections, while promised, did not come in time. Yet, having informed the centre of these activities has helped me reach out to local leaders. In a sense,

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<sup>18</sup> As discussed in chapter 4.1 the Old Believers are officially represented by the non-governmental organization, the Community of Russian Lipovans in Romania (CRLR).

I have followed two lines of networking. The first is that of formalised representatives of local branches of the organisation and their connections. The other, less formalised, depended on the connection of my husband (an Old Believer), and my husband's family and friends. It was, in a sense, fortuitous to have two directions as in some locations, relying on personal recommendations, I discovered some local tensions with the organisation's representatives that would have impacted on my fieldwork. This would place the contribution of the organisation in an unfair light, however, attendance at many of the events discussed here, such as the two iconography workshops or New Year celebrations would have been impossible without the benevolence of the leaders and employees.

During the research process, as anthropologists often mention (Okely, 2009), some of the people met have become friends and these relationships are still preserved today, especially with the help of social media. Some of these informants, via my marriage, have become members of my family in various degrees. It would be wrong to assume that any unrelated outsider would have been able to enjoy the levels of participation I was fortunate to reach through formal or informal networks. These efforts were necessary to develop an in-depth understanding of the emic (insider's) point of view, whereas a more superficial relationship would have only considered the etic (Harris, 1976).

A cautious mention needs to be made here for the way the subsequent chapters are written in this thesis, which derives from an ethical concern. In the tight-knit community of Old Believers my movements across different areas were easily traced. Such an instance occurred when in a regular phone conversation my father-in-law told me he had been informed of my participation in an event 300 kilometres away. In another instance, going to an administrative building in a village for an interview, I realised that the staff not only knew who I was but also who my host was. While this situation was informative as to the nature of relationships, it raised an ethical dilemma in terms of anonymity. Writing against the norms in anthropology, which often recommend describing informants in detail (Narayan, 2012), I decided to keep the informant blurred here. He/she offers the contours of a type, a representative of the group rather than an individual with particular characteristics, a composite character (Narayan, 2012). This achieved a second goal as well. Often the voices of informants overlapped, same arguments were raised in different instances, thus holding the representations blurred allowed these voices to stand for more than one person.

### 3.5 The 'I' in the Process

As Geertz (2000[1973]-b, p. 27) argues the ethnographer has to 'find' his/her 'feet' in the field. As some researchers have noted, the positivist project with a detached ethnographer, completely neutral, has utopian undertones (Van Mannen, 2011). Moreover, as this project assumes an interpretive framework, a neutral position of the researcher was not deemed appropriate from the start. As Nic Craith and Kockel (2014, p. 681) write ethnography entails a certain 'blurring of the lines between fact and fiction' as the truth is an elusive concept and every representation is shaped by the interpretation of the ethnographer. Or, as Manning argues

an ethnographic project would seem to require a central organizing concept, the self, or perspective by which sign and signifier are 'connected', and their meanings established in interaction-sourced reflections (Manning, 2007, p. 157).

It is this ethnographer's embodied knowledge process that guides this research. As outlined here, my personal rather than professional characteristics, have also influenced my research project to a great extent. Chief amongst these was my impending marriage to an Old Believer. In many of the instances and interactions this was my currency and often enough it was a blank credit card for people that had not met me yet. Before they could set their trust in me as an outsider coming in the community, they met me as an attentive party via my partner. This allowed me to develop a personal rather than professional connection from the start and led to building relationships that were close but also tested my vulnerabilities. There was little holding back in these engagements and I often felt a sense of disconnection when writing my notes and allowed my researcher skin to become primary.

At the beginning of the research I had anticipated being perceived as the 'Other', yet that I might be able to form a bridge by taking stock of my Romanianness. I had not realised that in this case the 'Other' was the Romanian when informants objectified me as a representative of the majority. This was often mentioned in relation to how 'you' (Romanians and myself by implication) do things, frequently with connotation that this was wrong. Identity formation processes became illustrative around this disjunction and my Romanianness was associated with Romanian Orthodoxy. In her work with Old Believers

in Alaska, Lee Silva (2009) notes that because she was not an Orthodox she had an advantage with the group, as it gave her the position of neutrality, yet proved difficult in terms of understanding the findings as she did not know the tenets of Orthodoxy. As an Orthodox Christian I had few problems understanding, yet in most instances I was unable to keep a neutral position and became a representative of ‘them’, embodying the stereotype. I was often told of the mistakes, the presumed heresies going on in churches, of the doubts that this faith raises. The boundary (Barth, 1969) was firmly set on these instances when I objectified this overbearing and misguided faith, there I was an ethnographer researching stereotypes becoming a stereotype myself. It was telling in this sense in a fieldwork encounter that happened when I was travelling with a friend. Her incidental presence in one of my field meetings made me reflect on my own knowledge process. While discussing with an informant about rituals some remarks about the erratic ways of Romanian orthodoxy made their way in the conversation. My friend was quiet and smiled but when we left she asked me: ‘How can you stand these remarks and not get offended?’. I tried to explain the dual process of stereotyping that goes on, how often ‘we’ have turned them in the exotic and backward ‘Other’ but this was hard to understand for an outsider. Reflecting on this issue later, I realised just how accustomed I had become to putting the Old Believers’ lenses on, that my own perception had shifted in the process. And indeed, this whole process has been transformative on both a professional and a personal level.

The overlapping identities of being a city-raised, unmarried, university-educated woman each presented their own challenges at different times in the project. In the process, I had challenged my own perceptions. At the start of the research, I had considered including both genders in an equal manner, yet in my own thinking I was reproducing the power relationships within the country and was biased in placing the men Old Believers first. Having read different critiques on gender, following my first visit in the field I have become more sensitive to the differences between genders. It soon became apparent that one of the striking characteristics of my position at the time of the research was my gender, which guided interactions in the field and framed my participation. At the first iconography workshop, as reflected in the dedicated chapter, my active participation was denied following the iconographer’s consideration that women should not paint icons. Later, my own understandings of what being an Old Believer man or woman entails were enriched by this lens.

The final issue to discuss here is my marital status, as this has also tested my relationships in the field. My status of an unmarried woman<sup>19</sup>, going around the country for my research raised some comments, familiar to other anthropologists (Okely, 2012). These took the form of harsher or more hilarious remarks. An older Old Believer woman, who had lived her whole life in her small village, thought that my ‘vagabonding’ around the country alone was ‘like in the movies’. Another informant explained for a great length of time, using detailed examples, the idea that inter-faith relationships inevitably fail. In several instances, inter-ethnic and inter-faith relationships and marriages were offered as examples for the dissolution of traditions. In each instance, irrespective of my own feelings, I placed the researcher ‘shell’ on to refrain my vulnerable human self from reacting. Acknowledging the vulnerabilities of the researcher (Behar, 1996) here does not diminish the results, each of these instances was suggestive for the nature of relationships.

My outsider position also helped me record some insights that an insider position might occlude. I was thus more easily neutral in my interactions with both *Popovtsy* and *Bespopovtsy*<sup>20</sup> Old Believers. On several occasions, I have noticed the fractions between the two groups, which mirror sometimes the interactions with ‘Romanians’ and my presence was that of an intermediary. While most of the data here reflects on interactions with *Popovtsy* informants, some interactions with *Bespopovtsy* have informed this project as well. The limitation in engagement with this latter group is one of the issues to consider in a future study.

### 3.6 Putting Everything Together

There is some uneasiness in what social sciences understand as data analysis and the process as followed by anthropologists. As Behar (1996, p. 7) notes:

An anthropologist's conversations and interactions in the field can never again be exactly reproduced. They are unique, irrecoverable, gone before they happen, always in the past, even when written up in the present tense.

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<sup>19</sup> At the time of my fieldwork I was not married.

<sup>20</sup> The distinction between *Popovtsy* and *Bespopovtsy* groups is discussed in detail in chapter 1.1., the basic distinction between the two groups is the presence or absence of a priest.

A significant part of this process involves reconstruction and memory-work (Fabian, 2010). As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) argue, data analysis is not a distinct follow-up procedure; rather it is an on-going endeavour of the researcher who is constantly selecting what to observe, what to record. This allows the progressive focusing of the research, or what is deemed as ‘funnelling’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 160), albeit researchers such as Okely (2012) consider this term artificial. Indeed, a process of gradual focusing has taken place in this project as well, following the first visit, and my attention has shifted from more general data to heritage processes as research progressed. Apart from this ongoing consideration, the systematic analysis took place following my return from the field. As Manning (2007, p. 156) explains ‘the data, like the messages, are subjected to formative processes’. For the analysis of data, I have treated the massive amounts of information gathered in fieldnotes and scarce diary entries as text. As mentioned earlier, the process has relied extensively on ‘headnotes’ (Sanjek, 1990) and retrospective reconstructions of the events witnessed.

Treating data as text has allowed me to process its contents easier, extract relevant patterns and organise them under themes. The grand themes are reflected upon in various chapters here as they relate to different processes that take place in the community. As this research process has been driven by fieldwork, I did not go in the field with a pre-designed coding structure, but codes were developed organically from data available. A mapping of these codes has been used to build links and develop interpretations. Manning (2007, p. 156) argues that ‘the mapping enables the ethnographer to imaginatively explore variations on the paradigms and metaphors discovered’.

Geertz’s approach to symbols is not profoundly semiotic; and the end product here is ‘loosely semiotic’ (Manning, 2007, p. 153) as well. As Geertz explains, a symbol stands ‘as a sign (an index for example), which becomes symbolical via a cultural interpretation’ (Micheelsen, 2002, p. 8). The final data analysis reflects these processes, and insights are illustrated with narratives of significant occurrences during fieldwork. The process employed to analyse data has included both manual and digital procession. The secondary data and interviews transcripts have been analysed with the aid of NVIVO software. The fieldnotes and scarce diary entries have undergone a manual thematic analysis that was correlated with the digital one.



### **3.7 Ethics in the Field and Beyond**

The entire research process has been conducted with careful consideration of ethical implications. Prior to engaging in fieldwork, I had applied for the approval of the Ethics Committee of Heriot-Watt University, and the committee confirmed this application on June 23<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Yet working with people entails a certain inherent vulnerability and I have had to make ethical decisions at every step of the process. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) argue, ethnography poses certain challenges on informed consent, as the researcher might not be able to inform everyone and at all times of all the research details. It was indeed the case for me. As often as possible I discussed my project with people and purposefully began these conversations by disclosing my researcher identity. At times, the nature of close connections, as described above, helped my attempts, as people had already been informed of my identity before I met them.

A further point to consider, is that to account for concerns with the exploitative nature of this research, one of the strategies I have employed was to ‘give something back’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 218). As such when the situation allowed me to contribute, I offered help, as described above. These small gestures were noticed and eased interaction with informants and in many instances helped build stronger connections. On several occasions, I have been asked to contribute with an article in *Zorile* magazine and to a blog project. I have also been asked to address the audience in formal events as a researcher studying Old Believers.

### **3.8 Limitations of Research**

The research project is subject to various limitations, including, but not limited, to material and time-related aspects, access to participants and personal qualifications. Material and time constraints are unavoidable in such a ‘yo-yo’ methodological approach to fieldwork. Yet, as Helena Wulff (2002) points out what I have lost in time I have tried to make up in the intensity of engagements while present in the field and through my virtual presence as discussed in the previous sections.

A further limitation was the fact that my knowledge of Russian is limited and at the time of fieldwork unusable. This is reflected in my choice of materials to include in my analysis, as Russian sources have been removed. In the field, as well, there were times when I was asked if I speak Russian during events when people around me used the Russian dialect.

On those occasions language emphasised my outsider position and people quickly pointed out I should learn the language. These disruptions, however, were limited by the fact that most people are bilingual and Romanian is no longer a secondary language for many (as discussed in chapter 6.3). A large segment of the younger population was in a similar position as they have very limited Russian linguistic skills, if any.

Some other limitations related to access to areas and people, due to the Lipovans' privacy there were instances when I was told that I was not allowed to go into an Old Believer church as the priest did not allow people of any other religion inside, even for events such as weddings or funerals.

A further consideration is that this study, as most others, has some shortcomings as well. First and foremost, the interpretive framework filters the ideas advanced here. As Okely (2009) showed, while studying the same location together with her husband, different frames and research interests rendered opposing results for the two researchers. Similarly, this research is profoundly personal and another researcher, maybe even going to the same places, talking with the same people, might get a different picture.

Moreover, any potential new research would necessitate more emphasis on urban settings. My engagement in these settings has been less successful than in villages where the fabric of life was different, connections were more easily created in the limited time I had available, and events always took place nearby.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

As any other research student, I have approached the current project from a particular viewpoint and unravelling the 'webs of heritage' led me to consider an interpretive multi-sited ethnography. The fluidity of my presence in the field and the reactions it triggered was considered for its potential to further inform about Old Believers' worldview and to situate the limits of my interpretation of the emic. As discussed, the 'field' presented in this thesis is as fluid as my own presence and is composed of the different locations and people met during several stints of physical presence, following the 'yo-yo' method discussed, and of engagements from afar. The manner in which the wealth of data collected was collated and analysed was also considered here, with an emphasis on some presentation decisions led by ethical considerations necessary in such a close-knit community.

Having set the general intellectual and methodological considerations necessary for framing the study, the following section of this thesis will present the analysis. First,

however, the next chapter considers the history of the group in general, its history in Romanian and existing literature to further contextualise the data presented and to draw some initial analytical reflections.

## 4. The Old Believers

*Dar cel în sufletul căruia s-a cuibărit patria nu-și va găsi liniștea până nu o va vedea, nu o va atinge, nu o va respira cu sufletul și trupul.*

[The person in whose soul homeland has nestled will not reach tranquillity until he will see it, he will touch it, he would not breathe it with soul and body] (*Fenoghen, 2005, p. 137.*

Building on the framework outlined in the previous chapters, this chapter sets the background for the analysis presented in chapters 5-8. To set the context, the chapter focuses on the particular history of Old Believers in Romania, from their initial arrival to the current post-socialist developments and their presence amongst minorities in a multicultural Romania. Another section of this chapter considers the work of previous scholars on Old Believers in Romania as well as other Old Believer communities in Europe and the Americas, while the last section considers the implications of Old Belief as heritage. This enquiry has a double purpose, not only to position my study, but also to expand the considerations mentioned in chapter 1 on the scarcity of studies on heritage.

### 4.1 Old Believers in Romania



**Figure 4.1 Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires**

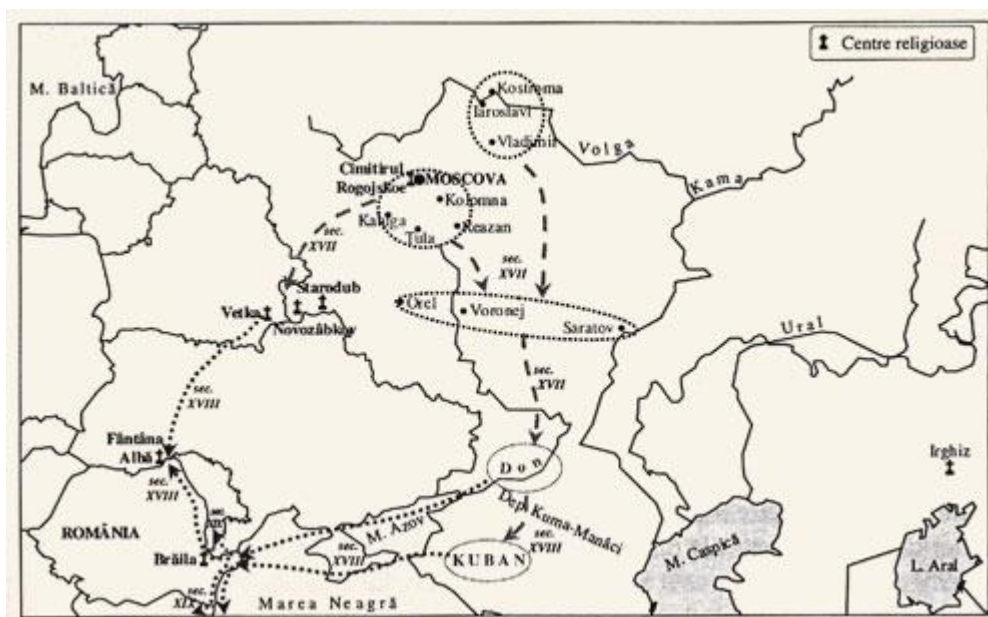
(Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Romania\\_1859-1878.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Romania_1859-1878.jpg))

As the historian Alexei Muraviov discusses in a recent video documentary (Preda, 2015), the migration towards the current Romanian territories has taken place in several waves, from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The 17-19<sup>th</sup> centuries were a turbulent period for the Romanian principalities (Wallachia/Muntenia, Moldova and Transylvania – figure 4.2), with most part of their territory conquered by major Empires of the moment, the Austro-Hungarian/Habsburg empire to the North and the Ottoman empire to the South-East – see figure 4.1 on page 75). The conditions Old Believers found upon coming to Romania were very different in the two regions; nonetheless they seemed to be greeted with courtesy by both Empires, which tolerated them and even offered different benefits such as tax exemptions and freedom to observe their belief (Fenoghen, 1998). The first mention of Old Believers in Romania dates from 1724 – 1740, when documents note that Old Believers resided in Moldova, in villages such as Socolinți – Lipoveni, Manolea and Lespezi (all in Suceava county), or Dumasca (Vaslui county) (Moldovan, 2004) (see figure 4.5 on p. 79).



**Figure 4.2** Map with markings of various borders as changed throughout history  
(Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Regiuni\\_istorice\\_romanesti.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Regiuni_istorice_romanesti.png))

#### 4.1.1 Migration to the South of the Country



**Figure 4.3 Migration patterns from Russia to Romania according to Ipatiov (Ipatiov, 2001)**

The geographic origin of the Old Believer groups that settled in the south-east of the country which was occupied by the Ottoman Empire at the time is not clear. Analysing available historic resources, Old Believer researchers have advanced two theories. First, an Old Believer historian (Fenoghen, 1998), for instance, has argued the first Old Believers had come to Dobrudja by sea, from the Kuban area (figure 4.3 – Brăila city marked on the map), in the period 1740-1761, and settled in Sarichioi and Dunăvăț villages (Tulcea county in the South-East of Romania - see figure 4.5 on page 79). He has also presented a local legend about the journey to Dobrudja transported by sea in kayaks, preponderantly at night in complete silence, to guard families against Russian authorities.

A somewhat controversial idea mentions an even older wave of migration, before the Schism, citing the works of the Turkish writer Evlia Celebi, which refers to Old Believers in Sarichioi village (Tulcea county) in mid 1600s (Fenoghen and Fenoghen, 2004). For other researchers (Ipatiov, 2001), and according to some of my informants as well, these arguments are not conclusive enough to be considered valid. The population that came here mostly belonged to the *Nekrasovsky Cossacks* led by Ignat Nekrasov. Historic data indicates this group's warrior past was considered an asset for the Ottomans who included the Cossacks in their army that led the Turkish - Russian wars during 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Ottomans offered Old Believers the freedom to practice their religion as long as they joined their army and fought against Russia (Fenoghen and Fenoghen, 2004).



**Figure 4.4** The main provinces of Romania today (Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6533446>)

#### ***4.1.2 Migration to the North of the Country***

The Old Believers in the northern part of the country, in the Bucovina and Moldavia areas (figure 4.4), are believed to have migrated from different areas of Russia. Although the exact origins have not been identified yet, Russian Old Believers from this side of the country are believed to have come from the southern part of Russia, from areas around Moscow and passing in their course through spiritual centres such as Vetka or Starodub (as marked in figure 4.3 on p. 77). The historians contend the regional differences are reflected in the slight cultural differences between groups from the North and the South of Romania presented in the following chapters.

The northern Romanian principalities, Bucovina and Moldavia were then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the privileges offered by Emperor Joseph II to Old Believers represented powerful incentives that led even Old Believers from Dobrudja to move in the area later on (Ipatiov, 2001). Thus, Romanian Old Believer historians have

documented an inner migration pattern as well, from Dobrudja to Moldavia (see figure 4.3 on page 77). Once the former empires had disappeared, Old Believers continued their existence as a minority following the formation of the Romanian state in 1859 through the unification of the historical provinces (figure 4.4 on page 78 shows the borders of the new state).



**Figure 4.5 Romania's counties today (Source:**  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:România\\_Județe.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:România_Județe.png))

#### ***4.1.3 Old Believers during the Socialist and Post-Socialist Period***

Anastasova (2008) argued that in the socialist period (1949-1989) the Old Believers had enjoyed a rather preferential treatment from Romanian authorities. Field discussions have also outlined a somewhat privileged position and a tacit acceptance of the Old Belief practice provided discretion was kept. One of the Old Believer monasteries was indeed closed during this period, but it was mostly because it had a printing press which could have been used to publish illegal dissident material. Vlad Naumescu (2016, p. 315) states that 'though marginal to the socialist project, Russian Old Blievers were not excluded from



it, and in some cases found themselves completely caught up in it'. Drawing a parallel with the work of Rogers (2009) in Russia, Naumescu has recently charted the change in ethical views of Romanian Old Believers (Naumescu, 2016), as some Old Believers who had concentrated on their secular life during socialism and downplayed religion, have resurfaced in the post-socialist period as devout believers.

A further issue to note is that Old Believers make a separation between *Bespopovtsy* and *Popovtsy* in Romania, based on two church hierarchies, '*Belokrinitskie*' (led from Brăila, Romania) and '*Novozybkovskaya*' (led from Moscow, Russia). This, however does not align with the definitions of the priestless groups at international level as it results from a temporal rather than ideological consequence. The communist regime only recognised the '*Belokrinitskie*' hierarchy (Crasovschi, 2005). Therefore, the Romanian *Bespopovtsy*, aligned with the Russian hierarchy of Old Belief, could not bring priests into Romania during communism and lived as priestless Old Believers. After 1990, they have restarted the line, with priests ordained by Russia, yet they are still known as priestless Old Believers. The numbers of the second group are much more limited, the competition between these groups and negative stereotyping about each other still exists today.

The main religious hierarchy today is the *Belaya Krinitsa*<sup>21</sup> one, or '*Belokrinitskie*', that has many churches while the *Novozybkovskaya* hierarchy has just a few. The *Belaya Krinitsa* hierarchy, according to the official website of the Romanian religious administration, has 37 parishes across the country, with 57 churches. Talks with representatives of *Novozybkovskaya* hierarchy during fieldwork showed that negotiations were held to unite the two lines into one single hierarchy but to this date they have not been finalised and these two lines remain separated. The second line is accepted by the Romanian state, but not formally recognised, thus no state funds are allocated to it. For *Belaya Krinitsa*, the state provides funds for salaries and maintenance and development. These brief historical considerations are relevant for understanding the complexity of the Old Believers' situation and show that, whereas this study employs the notion of 'community' its boundaries and configuration seem rather unhinged. This was confirmed, for instance in the debates on the local name of Old Believers, Lipovans.<sup>22</sup> Different hypotheses have been advanced on the origin of this name, which is most often linked with

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<sup>21</sup> The hierarchy was created in 1845 in Belaya Krinitsa (a former city on the current territory of Ukraine) and was later moved to Brăila (Romania).

<sup>22</sup> The name is only used by Old Believers in Romania and Moldova.

the name of linden tree, ‘*lipa*’, a traditional material frequently used in the past. Another theory suggests this name evokes one of Old Believers’ leaders, Filip (Vinteler, 2010). Proponents of this latter idea consider the name Lipovan as a derogatory nickname, as Filip lead a priestless group, while Old Believers in Romania recognise a priest (Ipatiov, 2001). Whichever hypothesis is true, Old Believers nowadays mostly accept the Lipovan nomination, and are officially listed at national level as the ‘Lipovan Russians’ ethnic group, an ‘*identité institutionnalisée*’ [institutionalised identity] that is only specific to Romania (Anastasova, 2008, p. 39, my translation).<sup>23</sup> Supporters of the latter hypothesis prefer the ‘*starovery*’<sup>24</sup> name linked with religion.

Definition becomes political at times, and some informants argued that they are Russians actually, deviating from other Russians immigrants only through their belief. Following the 1989 events, the changes in the political regime allowed Old Believers to become more active in promoting their heritage, while religious pluralism granted them the right to practice their religion freely. Soon after the fall of the communist regime, some Lipovan Russian intellectuals created the representative non-governmental organisation (NGO), CRLR (Feodor, 2012a). To this day, the organisation is actively involved in promoting Old Believers’ customs and traditions through different actions, some of these events discussed in the following chapters. They support education by publishing various books and manuals and organise regular trips to Russia to help them learn more about their roots. Moreover, members of the community are actively involved in political life, trying to promote the interests of the minority. The Lipovan Russians have one representative in the Parliament Group of National Minorities, who also acts as president of CRLR. This organisation aims to unite

*eforturilor membrilor săi în apărarea și exercitarea drepturilor la păstrarea, dezvoltarea și exprimarea identității etnice, lingvistice și culturale a etnicilor ruși lipoveni.*

[the efforts of its members in defence and application of rights concerning the preservation, development and expression of ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity of Lipovan Russian ethnics.] (CRLR, 2008).

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<sup>23</sup> All translations from Romanian, French and occasionally Russian are my own, hereafter a mention will be made only in the event of using a translation from a different source.

<sup>24</sup> The Russian translation of term Old Believers.

Whereas the legal name of the community is Lipovan Russians, the statute of the NGO points to the somewhat ambiguous identification processes at play in the community as the organisation consists of '*cetățeni români, cunoscuți sub denumirile de ruși, ruși-lipoveni sau lipoveni*' [Romanian citizens known as Russian, Lipovan Russians or Lipovans] (CRLR, 2008). A close relationship with Russia has been re-established as well, and due to lobbying activities, the NGO was recognised by Russia as official member of its diaspora in 2006.

CRLR also publishes most of the literature on Old Belief, with an overwhelming majority of authors from the community, academics purported to be only legitimate voices that can truly capture the emic perspective. The perception of external researchers seems to be positive as well, where the likes of Richard Morris (1991;1999), reputed Old Believer scholar, are regularly invited to the dedicated conferences organised every three years in Romania. There is an obvious preoccupation among the Old Believer intelligentsia to problematise and research their own culture. Often such works are popularised in the two periodicals, *Zorile* and *Kitej Grad* discussed in chapter 5. They are also used for the revitalisation efforts discussed in the following chapters, and at times used as strategic devices to instil a sense of duty among Old Believers.

## **4.2 Old Believers in National Statistics**

Statistical data informs the study further as it has implications for the methodology discussed but also has implications for the long-term tendencies. Over the last 27 years, the community has registered a constant decline. For instance, according to Ipatiov (2001), in the 1930s census the total number of Lipovans recorded was 50,725 and by 1992, there were only 38,606 Lipovans in Romania (Ipatiov, 2001). The most recent census, conducted in 2011, showed that there are only 23,487 Lipovans left in the country (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2011), a small group that represents less than 1% of the total population of Romania. Divided by sexes, the community is formed by 12,369 women (52.66%) and 11,118 men (47.34%).

Some informants contested these numbers, indicating some people prefer to be called Russians instead of Lipovan Russians and actual numbers should be much higher (an informal number suggested by some informants was 100,000 people). A further aspect that influences this number is that Lipovans have followed the increased mobility patterns of

the time, looking for work outside Romanian borders. Popular destinations include Torino (Italy) or Bilbao (Spain), cities where Lipovans have formed tight networks (Sallanz, 2005). The size of the diaspora cannot be assessed as these numbers are not recorded in censuses by ethnicity.



**Figure 4.6 Geographical spread of Lipovan Russians based on the 2011 census (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2011) (figure by Pavel Lupu, with permission)**

In terms of geographical spread, the statistical data has shown there are small communities of Lipovans throughout Romania, 41 of the 42 counties have at least five people who belong to this ethnic group. The key areas (signalled with dark red in figure 4.6) are the same core areas highlighted by their original settlement. The largest clustering of Lipovans is in the eastern part of the country, north and south. As outlined by table 4.1 (p. 84) and suggested on the map the largest concentration of Old Believers is in Tulcea, Brăila and Constanța counties (south-east). In the village where the first mentions of Old Believers were recorded in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Mitocu Dragomirnei, there are only 311 people left.

<b>Romanian County</b>	<b>Locality</b>	<b>Old Believers Population</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Old Believers in Romania</b>
Tulcea	Sarichioi	2,328	9.91%
Tulcea	Carcaliu	2,068	8.80%
Brăila	Brăila	1,940	8.26%
Constanța	Ghindărești	1,865	7.94%
Tulcea	Tulcea	1,738	7.40%
Tulcea	Jurilovca	1,467	6.25%
Tulcea	Slava Cercheză	1,253	5.33%
Iași	Târgu Frumos	841	3.58%
Iași	Focuri	570	2.43%
Suceava	Forăști	501	2.13%

**Table 4.1 Localities with large groups of Old Believers based on the 2011 Census (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2011)**

The census reported that the majority of Old Believers have declared Russian as mother tongue (18,121), but a number of Old Believers have declared Romanian as their maternal language (5,340 people). The tendency observed by analysing statistical data is for Lipovans living in cities to declare Romanian instead of their traditional language, while people in the villages tend to be more conservative. Linguists who have researched Slavic populations in Romania have noted parallels between Lipovans and Ukrainians in this respect. Such common characteristics include their bilingualism as well as a tendency for people who live in cities, due to employment or military service, to abandon Russian and adopt Romanian instead (Vascenco, 2006) (implications of these considerations on the efforts to preserve linguistic skills will be discussed in Chapter 6).

While traditional studies of Old Believers link Lipovans with life in villages (Ipatiov, 2001), statistics have shown an increase in the number of people living in cities. According to the last census, 9,641 Lipovans (approximately 41.06%) are city-dwellers and 13,846 people still live in villages. These brief figures reflect the complexity of the situation of Old Believers and further emphasise the need for a multi-sited fieldwork methodology.

### 4.3 Research on Old Believers

As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis Old Believers have drawn attention of many researchers due to their exoticism. In this sense, their study aligns with the anthropological studies of the past that had researchers trekking to the far corners of the world in search of such remote groups. This research thus builds on such a rich corpus of literature, but there are some caveats to this affirmation. The studies on the group from Romania (hereafter referred to as Romanian Old Believers) are mainly in Romanian or Russian. At the turn of the century several research projects have been conducted, both by researchers from Eastern Europe and Western Europe and their results were presented in English (for instance Naumescu, 2011; Naumescu, 2013; Naumescu, 2016) or French (Anastasova, 2008; Beaumont, 2008). Most of the studies discussed here do not address heritage specifically, yet they are informative for the purposes of my study. As the focus of this thesis is on Romanian Lipovans, studies on this group will be considered primarily, yet some insights from studies on different communities across the world have proven useful in shaping my understanding of the Old Believers' values and circumstances.

Recent studies on Old Believers have focused on identity and to some extent, confirmed my own findings. Although identity was not the specific focus of this study, in any research on heritage, questions of identity are unavoidable (Smith, 2015). One interesting insight, which echoes my own findings as well, comes from the work of Mihală (2009) who recorded a multiplicity of definitions in the identity discourse of Old Believers in Dobrudja. Her analysis of discourses from different villages showed that Old Believers in multicultural environments tend to have a different discourse than those from villages composed only of Lipovans and Romanians, where demarcations between groups are stronger. In my own study the discrepancies between different settings were reflected in stronger stereotyping and reinforcement of borders in less diverse areas (see chapter 5).

Other researchers' studies have emphasised the religious dimension of identity (Constantin, 2011; Constantin, 2012; Constantin, 2013). The dominance of their religious identification amongst a multiplicity of identity discourses was also recorded by ethnographic research in Carcaliu village in 2008 (Capoți *et al.*, 2009). A cross-ethnic quantitative study in Dobrudja confirms this as well, the results of the study highlighted religious belief as a main trait of Lipovans, followed closely by pride and valuing their ethnic identity (Garlan, 2011). Considering the resurgence of recent migration processes (chapter 1), which have influenced identity discourses and have weakened the reference to national frames, led

Anastasova to propose a new label of ‘Euro-Old Believers’ that emphasises religious identity rather than any national attachment (Anastasova, 2008, p. 20). Analysed in parallel with the earlier commentaries on the history of Old Belief, these findings are not remarkable but they outline an idea of importance for this study, the centrality of religion that is discussed later in parallel with discourses on the duty towards ancestors to preserve the faith.

In her study, Anastasova (2008) also drew a link with authenticity and argued that a self-ascribed identity of Old Believer brings political gains. She argued that in the case of members of the Lipovan community with power authenticity is questionable, as they have little knowledge of their culture’s basic traits and disregard key aspects related to religion. Such a critical stance is reflective of an etic view of Old Believers, whereas my own study takes an emic perspective, as discussed in chapter 3, which brings a more nuanced consideration of authenticity and its implications.

A further area of interest, intimately linked with identity, is that of language and the patterns of integration in daily lives: ‘From the time we learn to talk, our world is mediated by language. We ourselves are mediated by language’ (Nic Craith, 2012b, p. xiii). Language, addressed in numerous linguistic studies<sup>25</sup> (such as Vascenco, 2003; Evseev, 2005a; Vascenco, 2006), is beyond the scope of the study but the concern of Old Believer researchers with language studies points to the uneasy situation of language. Some of these studies can be interpreted as salvaging efforts, documenting certain aspects before they disappear. One specific insight that is particularly useful for my own discussion is expressed by Macarov – Halcă (2005) who argues that both innovation and conservatism are found in Old Believers’ current language use and their knowledge and usage of religious terms exhibits both tendencies.

The efforts for language preservation are considered thus here in parallel with the larger processes taking place in Romania (outlined in chapter 1). A relevant insight in this respect, comes from the work of Prygarine, Bouvard and Cauldefy-Faucart (2004) on Old Believers in Ukraine and Romania. The chameleonic features of Old Believers are outlined in their study that recorded variability in Old Believers’ linguistic acquisition over time. As they inhabited spaces that experienced several shifting of borders, they learned different

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<sup>25</sup> Commenting on Victor Vascenco’s contribution to the study of Old Belief, Evseev (2005a) notes that Vascenco’s work has been so rich that it can be argued he has started a new field of research called ‘*rossica lippovana*’.

languages as imposed by the reigning power at the time, such as Turkish, Bulgarian and Ukrainian. The authors referred to this variability as ‘vertical bilingualism’ (Prygarine, Bouvard and Coldefy-Faucart, 2004, p. 261, my translation) which changes with each generation. These are interesting points to consider in parallel with Old Believers’ recent migrations across borders. A recent study in Carcaliu (Capoți *et al.*, 2009) records the results of such recent migrations, especially to Torino, and shows that while the attachment towards Russian language is diluted from generation to generation, the commitment for traditions within the community is still strong (Capoți *et al.*, 2009). My own considerations on the flexibility and linguistic strategies of older and newer generations are discussed in chapter 6, paired with reflections on preservation efforts. The influences of migration patterns on the community have appeared in discussions with informants time and time again.

As discussed in the previous chapter, a strong link is drawn in this study between intangible heritage and folklore and for this purpose, the work of folklorists in the area is of relevance as well. Some studies of Old Believers effuse a certain romanticist view, emphasising Russianness and the preservation of traditions, such as Danilov’s (2009, p. 220) study of the sauna ritual, as a ritual with deep connotations and manifestation of the ‘Russian soul’. On the other hand, Plotnikova’s (2008) or Dushakova’s (2013) research paints a more complex picture that brings change to the fore. Considering the juncture of Russian and Romanian in the folk traditions of Old Believers, Plotnikova’s research focused on mythical Romanian characters such as *Baba Dochia*<sup>26</sup>, *ursitoare*<sup>27</sup> or *mărțișor*<sup>28</sup> as well as some of the rituals related to birth, weddings and funerals. Plotnikova argued that while some traditions are firmly dismissed as exclusively Romanian (demonology, funeral rites), others are adopted by Old Believers also (some birth and wedding rituals) and replace their own. Dushakova’s study of dwelling practices in Moldova and South Ukraine, has also outlines local influences. In a similar vein, Macarov (2004, p. 104) notes that although the

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<sup>26</sup> *Baba Dochia* is one of the most famous folk legends in Romania, still present in rural and urban lore in different variants. The one I have learned is that *Baba Dochia* had gone in the mountains with her sheep at the beginning of spring, when weather is misleading. As it seemed warm she took off each day one of her 9 coats, but at the end the weather turned and she froze to death.

<sup>27</sup> Mythical creatures that are believed to have magical powers; who can tell the future.

<sup>28</sup> A symbol of spring, *mărțișor* is another pagan tradition preserved until today in Romania. It is a small white and red string worn with a brooch in the beginning of March.



community was relatively closed, traditions have changed. The adaptations of ritual practices are discussed here as well yet there is a need to consider, apart from Romanian influences, those rooted in the larger processes where the local is transformed by the global (Massey, 1995). A further reflection on the process of living together with other cultures is outlined in Fenoghen's (2009) analysis of Romanian and Russian literature; shared life has made Old Believers more adaptable while striving to maintain their way of life.

As mentioned in chapter 1, Romania is a multicultural state and the Dobrudja area, and especially the Danube Delta are often portrayed as a multicultural heaven (chapter 5.2.5). A collection of studies in Sulina city exposes some of the problems with such an approach. Focused on more than one ethnic group, these studies include representatives of Old Believers also, as part of the multicultural urban space of Sulina (Teampău *et al.*, 2008; Teampău and Van Assche, 2008a; Teampău and Van Assche, 2008b; Van Assche *et al.*, 2009; Van Assche and Teampău, 2009; Teampau and Van Assche, 2010). The continuous process of social identity redefinition is assessed from the point of view of borders or boundaries (Van Assche *et al.*, 2009) or the multicultural urban palimpsest (Van Assche and Teampău, 2009) and the commonality of these findings is that identity, in the authors' views, is formed in reference to place rather than ethnic or cultural affiliation. There is a risk that such studies in a sense reproduce the 'banality of difference' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, p. 77), downplaying variances between ethnic groups in favour of an equalising communal city life. The considerations of marginality and nostalgia, pervasive through all these studies, are nevertheless instructive: 'in the Delta, several boundaries and marginalities coexist, and old boundaries can be revived in the blink of an eye' (Teampău *et al.*, 2008, p. 130). Of relevance here are, as well, the strong boundaries between Old Believers and other religious groups, albeit Romanian orthodoxy or rising new religions such as Adventism (Gog, 2009). As Gog (2009) notes in his study in Dobrudja, ethnic and religious boundaries are performed not only in the case of living people but also in the case of the after-life as well. My work has been influenced by the perception of boundaries as well, albeit it was mostly the borders between Old Belief and Romanian Orthodoxy.

One of the focal points of this study, as mentioned above, is religion and in this sense, the discussion of heritage processes is linked with the previous valuable research from the anthropology of religion. These studies offer insights into Old Believers religious imaginary, linked with fundamental values of the community. One of the key themes, in this respect is that of transmission to ensure a continuity of practice of religion and the work

of Naumescu (2010; 2011; 2013) in Periprava, a secluded village in the Danube Delta is relevant. The crisis discussed, the absence of a priest, has offered rich ground for an analysis of the temporal worldview of Old Believers. Transmission is ensured by the knowledge of Slavonic text and a complete lack of linguistic skills would lead to ‘the village’s exclusion from the textual community that makes Old Belief’ (Naumescu, 2011, p. 62). In the anthropological documentary, *Birds Way/Drumul păsărilor*, produced by Naumescu and Trencsényi (2009), a young man ponders on the possibility of becoming a priest but the prospect is unappealing due to the strict rules he would need to observe (priests need to keep a long beard and to be married). The vulnerability of his community in the absence of a priest is considered, but the life-style incompatibilities prevail. Various other crises in relation to transmission, beyond the presence and absence of priests are discussed in my study as well, particularly in relation to the knowledge of Slavonic and the performance of rituals. Some of the key traits of Old Belief outlined by Naumescu include its eschatological inclination<sup>29</sup> and kenoticism.<sup>30</sup> A further issue that is central to the discussion of material culture as well as of linguistic skills is what Naumescu describes as textualism<sup>31</sup> – Old Belief relies heavily on reading church books aloud during services and this practice is inextricably linked with the availability of both resources (material and immaterial).

In light of the present transformations within the community, discussions on a possible future of the community are also interesting to consider. While some researchers note the strength of these groups lies in the preservation of traditions, for Beaumont (2008), the future of the Old Belief is not in Dobrudja. Declining numbers of inhabitants and the area’s ecological transformations led the researcher to argue that while the Delta population has successfully managed to preserve the Old Belief for three centuries, its future might actually be in America, where Old Believers have a stronger community (Beaumont, 2008). His argument is noteworthy; especially when analysed in parallel with Crummey’s statement about the decline of Old Belief included at the beginning of this chapter.

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<sup>29</sup> Eschatology refers to the Old Believers’ preoccupation with the end of time. For them, the entire life should be lived in preparation for the afterlife.

<sup>30</sup> Kenoticism is linked with humility: ‘Orthodoxy, especially in its more specific form of Russian kenoticism, proposes an ideal of Christian life modelled on the humility of Christ on the cross’ (Naumescu 2013, p. 91).

<sup>31</sup> Naumescu uses textualism to emphasise the importance Old Belief places on the written word. Each service depends on reading and chanting of holy texts from centuries-old liturgical books.

Romanian Old Believers academicians' work has considered these issues also (Fenogen 2005, Fenoghen 2009, Nistor and Ivlampie 2006, Ivlampie 2013) proposing both positive and negative prognoses. Fenoghen brings an optimistic perspective noting that while adapting to their host settings Old Believers have preserved their cultural and spiritual features (Fenoghen 2009). At the opposite end, researchers argue that the fast pace of life and the effects of globalisation leave a powerful mark on the community, and that the numbers of people still observing traditions and preserving Old Believers' way of life are too few to save the community. The lure of 'modern' urban life, a change of working patterns and migration are often signalled as culprits:

As the traditional structure of community life is becoming less and less stable and the use of Russian is generally restricted to use in the family, or possibly in the village, the young are losing their interest in maintaining the traditional ways (Crasovschi, 2005, p. 51).

Further valuable comparative information for this study has resulted from the works of researchers on different communities around the world. While researchers tend to disagree about the historic development of the Old Believer movement, the main trait that they seem to agree on is the tenacious way these groups preserve their traditions and the emphasis they place on their cultural heritage (Crummey, 1970; Dolitsky' and Kuz'mina, 1986; Scheffel, 1991). Scheffel (1991, p. 3), for instance, creatively describes the Alberta Old Believer community as an 'offshoot from a mighty tree with very long roots'.

A further main feature that researchers agree on is the commitment to preserve traditional ways of life. Different communities manifest the same diachronic view of time, instead of looking ahead to the future they glorify the past and these patterns are relevant for Romanian Old Believers as well, voiced in numerous nostalgic utterances. This orientation towards the past is more extreme in some cases, Alberta and Siberia Old Believers have resisted using modern technology, such as television sets, to prevent influences from the outside world (Scheffel, 1991; Lyubimova, 2009).

The use of heritage as a resource (Bendix, 2009a) has been documented in Estonia (Aidarov, 2006; Kõivupuu, 2012; Aidarov, 2016), a country where the Old Believers' heritage is emphasised at regional as well as national level (Aidarov, 2006), unlike my case study. Kõivupuu's (2012) study is focused on food and exposes the creativity of Old

Believers that Crummey (2011) has repeatedly emphasised. Food heritage, a staple of Old Believer heritage, has been turned into a useful and successful resource in the Peipsi area that brings revenue. Aidarov's (2006; 2016) studies, however, track the uneasiness in opening access to tourists beyond dedicated places such as the local museum or the restaurant. Whereas touristic activity is posited as an alternative means of building a life the acceptance of tourists in churches or the sale of religious objects as souvenirs raises reticence. His studies emphasise the importance of inner-group efforts to preserve heritage and religious traditions. A way out might be, according to Aidarov, to create better state-supported projects to advance economic development, better educational activities as well to enlist the help of UNESCO. Berg's (1997, p. 375) view on the struggles to maintain religious traditions in Peipsi area is bleak: 'In many ways, at the end of the twentieth century, Old Believers resemble the "last Mohicans", despite their own wishes or our desire to help them'.

Many studies have, unsurprisingly, emphasised the importance Old Believers place on religion in their lives as well as the fact that their understanding of religion is built upon the 'old ways'. Some recent studies, however, have outlined a receding influence of religion (Plaat, 2005; Aidarov, 2006). For instance, Plaat (2005, p. 28) argued that in the post-socialist period religious identity is not as strong and younger generations' identity 'is rather ethno-linguistic than religious' and only women and older people still hold strong religious beliefs. Pilvet (2014, p. 83), on the other hand, has raised the issue of external representations and how they create reactions at community level, arguing that 'the Old Believers' identity is a choice rather than a heritage', an idea that I find to be less convincing as the two do not necessarily exclude each other.

The transmission of religion through spoken word, emphasised by Naumescu (2011) for Romanian Old Believers, is outlined in Thompson's study in Oregon as well:

The core of the Old Believers' faith is held within written texts that they revere, but the texts by themselves do not ensure the continuation of the tradition. The texts must be uttered and made an active part of the Old Believers' lives (Thompson, 2001, p. 214).

Rendition of texts relies on continuity of linguistic skills and the preservation of tradition that the Oregonian community seems to have less troubles with. Razumovskaya's ethnographic research on marriage rituals shows how Old Believers here

are typical representatives of the so called 'island culture', having preserved inside their enclosed space the main features of the 'mainland culture' from which they were torn away a long time ago' (Razumovskaya, 2008, p. 98).

Both Old Believer groups in the region, from Turkey and China, preserve marriage rituals that are only held in memory in Romania. The idea of insularity has also been discussed by Romanian Old Believers academics, who have found this model representative for their community (Evseev, 2005b). A question is thus raised whether the recent relative opening up of the Romanian Lipovan community has led to the elimination of some rituals.

The same preference for the past is noted in the Oregon community's clothing customs. Here, the Old Believers attires resemble those of their time in Russia, such as the traditional '*rubashka*' shirt and belt worn by men (Dolitsky' and Kuz'mina, 1986). These considerations can be applied to the priestless communities in the Baltic areas and the Russian north also, where traditions and products of material culture have endured over the ages (Pentikäinen and Raudalainen, 1999a). White Johnson's (1982) study, however, showed that even in the 80s, there was some degree of cross-cultural borrowing and acculturation was registered even before the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Morris observed that in the United States closer contact with the host society has brought a disconnect from Old Believers' way of life, and following outside influences 'young people are questioning many of the rules that their parents insist they follow' (Morris, 1990, p. 361). Different strategies for protection against this were recorded by researchers. Such a protection mechanism consisted in a tendency for marriages to happen among the community members; a reticence for marriages outside the community has been documented both for American and European groups (Morris, 1991; Plaat, 2005). This is relevant for Romanian Old Believers as well, as mixed marriages are often regarded as a source of weakening of traditions and an obstacle for the preservation of heritage in the long run.

Language preservation also features strongly in many of the ethnographic works about Old Believers. In his study of the Oregon group Morris (1991) noted that despite the fact

younger generations manifested a preference for English, older generations preferred Russian for their daily interactions, a situation I have encountered in my study as well. Estonian groups are bilingual as well, however knowledge of Old Slavonic used in church texts is limited (Pentikäinen and Raudalainen, 1999b). Old Believers in Arakul' (Russia) also held a strong commitment for Russian, going as far as prohibiting children to go to school so they would not stop reading the Church books (Nakamura, 1999).

A further theme of interest for my study is that of gender (Clopot and Nic Craith, forthcoming). Paert employed a gendered approach to show how from the beginning of the schism to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the gender relations in the priestless Old Believers community had been redefined from a more equalitarian approach to a patriarchal model that advocated the domestic-public separation. For her, this process 'proves once again the remarkable ability of Old Believers to redefine tradition in the changing world' (Paert, 2003, p. 236). The adaptability of Old Believers is exemplified in Rogers' (2009) historical ethnography as well. Rogers analysed the way Perm's residents have reconciled secular and religious lives, showing how, to adapt to secular demands, they had deferred religious pursuits for the later stages of life.

#### **4.4 Old Belief as Heritage**

Religion stands as the primary marker of an Old Believer identity, even people that prefer to be named Russians instead of Lipovans (section 4.3), recognise that religion differentiates them from regular Russians. Old Belief, as an inherited religion, gives Old Believers the illusion of stability (Naumescu, 2016). Living religious heritage gives 'meaning and purpose to human life' (Stovel, 2005, p. 9) and religion here doubles as diasporic heritage (Eisenlohr, 2013), as a form of religion that keeps them looking inwards, rather than outside their community. It offers a referential point for belonging, and informants have often noted that religion has kept the community united.

Continuity is an important theme for the study of Eastern Orthodoxies, at times even a problematic one. In the introductory chapter of an edited collection about Eastern Orthodoxy, Hann and Goltz (2010, p. 2) discussed the implications of an emic understanding of continuity. The emic view, argued the anthropologists, was grounded in the works of the 'early fathers', subsumed by the term 'Tradition'. In this light, the continuity of religious practice is thus seen as a duty for newer generations, as one informant said:

*au murit atâția oameni și și-au sacrificat viețile să ducă tradiția mai departe și noi avem acum totul pe tavă nu avem niciun fel de restricție, putem să ne manifestăm liber.*

[So many people died, they sacrificed their lives to carry the tradition forward and now we have everything on a tray, no restrictions, we can express ourselves freely] (Șerban, 2015).

This quote refers to Old Belief as a religious Tradition.<sup>32</sup> In this sense, continuity involves an uninterrupted chain of transmission of such rules and practices (Hann and Goltz, 2010) and echoes Hann's (2011, p. 16) argument that 'the greater degree of doctrinal continuity and conservatism in the Eastern Churches is irrefutable'.

Both literature and my own fieldwork data have outlined signs of both continuity and innovation in Old Believers' religious practices (Naumescu, 2011; Naumescu, 2016). Change is not easily accepted as 'one of the most characteristic features of the Old Belief is its strict adherence to ritual purity' (Pentikäinen, 1999, p. 14). Innovation has been condemned from the time of Nikon and Old Believers emphasised their continuity of a form of religion harking back to the time of Prince Vladimir, in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Inheriting this conservative gene, it is no wonder then that even today discourses within the community emphasise stability.

As Geertz noted sacred symbols have a great importance as they

synthesize a people's ethos—the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood—and their world view—the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order (Geertz, 2000[1973]-a, p. 89).

Changes of symbols thus would imply an altering of the worldview as well. Some of the characteristics of Old Belief that are preserved today are:

- The sign of the cross, 'the most important visual symbol which implies deep cultural values ranging from ancient dogmas to peasant fantasies' (Pentikäinen, 1999, p.

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<sup>32</sup> Tradition, sometimes named Holy Tradition within theology, refers to the practices and set of rules observed by a specific religion, as an unwritten set of rules that complement the written word, the Scripture.

16), is made with two fingers, while the new rite Orthodox believers use three fingers;

- Bowing to the ground instead of to the waist (*'poklon'*), with hands and head supported by a *'podrujnik'* (chapter 7.3);
- Using the 8-cornered cross instead of the 4-cornered cross used by Greek orthodoxy;
- Circling the church clockwise as opposed to counter clockwise in processions such as during the Easter service or during the wedding ceremony;
- Spelling of the name of Jesus with a single 'I' *Isus* (while the new rite uses the double 'I' *Iisus*). This last point was often mentioned in my talks with Old Believers as they considered this change heretical and one iconographer met during my fieldwork explained that such a change would somehow imply there are two of Jesus (referring to the Russian 'I' translated as 'and').

Another marker of continuity is the use of the Julian calendar instead of the Gregorian calendar, used by mainstream Orthodoxy in Romania. This calendar has a 13-days difference, for example Christmas is celebrated on the 7<sup>st</sup> of January and the New Year on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

Strict religious rules, different for each sex, regulate the life of an Old Believer, echoing what Morris called 'a person with a 17<sup>th</sup> century Russian ethic, accommodated to 20<sup>th</sup> century democratic structures and values' (Morris, 1999, p. 106). The religious life of Old Believers is separated into periods of fasting followed by periods of eating meat and dairy products. Weeks-long fasting diets are spread throughout the calendar year, the longest fasting periods are before Easter and Christmas (discussed further in chapter 6.1). Moreover, similar to monastic life, Wednesday and Fridays of every week are considered fasting days; a duty lessened by the fact that some weekly fasting days allow the consumption of fish. Moreover, during fasting days some Old Believers refused to listen to music, an activity deemed appropriate only for non-fasting days.

The use of calendar serves to regulate not only religious but also social events, as weddings cannot take place during fasting periods. A specific practice, different from other orthodox rites, includes the blessing of fruits in late summer and some informants refused to eat grapes or apples before this ceremony. For some, this rule only applied to the fruits grown in a private garden and not the mass commercialised fruits found in supermarket.



Following Hafstein (2012, p. 513) ‘heritage is very much concerned with the ways in which culture is embodied and the ways in which bodies are cultured’ and in this sense analysing religion outlines some thought-provoking ideas. Religion in its embodied everyday manifestations, is visible through small signs that set the Old Believer apart. Before and after drinking any type of liquid, except high-grade alcohol, a cross sign should be made. During fieldwork, an informant even made a cross after drinking a *Coldrex* hot drink she needed as she was ill. When asked about this she argued it is water, thus it requires crossing. The beginning and end of the day is marked by ritual prayers as well. Religious practices are inculcated into their way of life from an early age, with children fasting together with adults for weeks and going to church regularly.

The pressures that informants identified as having led to a loss of religiosity were centred around two themes, globalisation and migration. Globalisation and increased modernity, it was argued, brought secularisation which threatened the carefully-guarded continuity of Old Belief. The Old Believers communities also have an unsettled relationship with migration. While in some areas it is perceived as sole economic solution against poverty, it leads to a loosening of practices, which will ultimately impact upon the future of the community. Migration has already brought changes in communities, as some informants noted it was difficult for their relatives to practice Old Belief abroad in the absence of organised structures such as a church. Some try to resist this by requesting the help of a priest from Romania for major events or by accepting adaptations of rituals as in the case of christening discussed in chapter 6.1.1. One informant recounted a travel to Denmark to perform a traditional christening.

While the considerations above might suggest there is a cohesive view on Old Belief, inner diversity exists and it often sparks heated discussions. As Hafstein notes

heritage is also a site of contestation, where individuals and groups display dissent, question structures of allegiance, and blur social boundaries (Hafstein, 2012, p. 514).

The above-mentioned *Novozybkovskaya* hierarchy was often discussed in derogatory terms by informants who were part of the other hierarchy. Although practicing Old Belief as well, through their allegiance with Moscow, these churches stand at the margins of the Old Believer community. At declarative level, a certain openness exists, as a person of

*Novozybkovskaya* denomination explained Old Believers are free to attend services in whichever church they chose. In practice, the borders are more sharply enforced. In one instance observed, in a group of children the one belonging to this denomination was teased by the others, as his ways were different.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The current case study's 'nuts and bolts' were identified in this chapter and some of the key ideas analysed in the following chapters are prefigured by this contextualisation. The historical data provided has positioned the Old Believers in time and place, and has outlined one of the key narratives of heritage discourses, that of continuity, discussed in depth hereafter in parallel with that of change. Moreover, the details provided for the Romanian context, are necessary to reflect internal diversity. The key ideas outlined by studies in both Romanian and international communities offer a solid starting ground for my own work, delineating some of the key older and newer patterns in the community, yet there are many facets of heritage-making processes which are not reflected in these projects. Themes such as media or museum representations, the transmission of crafts and the use of heritage resources for touristic purposes are considered within the frame of this study, adding new ideas to the corpus of literature. The last part of this section has considered the various ways Old Belief, interpreted as heritage, is embedded in daily lives, the manner it structures their lives and how it has been adapted to current realities of life in 21<sup>st</sup> century. The subsequent chapter thus opens the analysis with a discussion of the representations of Old Believers in the media both inside and outside sources.

## 5. Old Believers (in the) Media

Several editions of *Zorile*, the Old Believers' magazine, were laying forgotten on the windowsill of the church. I noticed these as they seemed out of place as secular publications in a religious setting. Later I found out, however, that sometimes priests receive the publication to distribute to community members and thus their presence was not out of place. Many field interactions included discussions of the publication, informers spoke proudly of their written contributions, or that their child had appeared in this and that edition, confirming that 'ethnic media are at the heart of the everyday practices that produce and transform ethnic identity, culture, and perceptions of race' (Matsaganis, Katz and Ball-Rokeach, 2011, p. 15). There is a significant amount of discussion around the community of Old Believers defined as 'ethnic group', an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2006[1983]), and ethnic media has a significant role in building and maintaining community. Such media support the maintenance of connections with other Old Believers: 'these fellow readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community' (Anderson, 2006[1983], p. 44). Media thus play a central role as 'such imagining of the community is produced and reproduced in the media' (Cormack, 2007, p. 54) and the idea of belonging is enhanced through the ritualised repetition of such core themes across texts. Moreover, there is an activist feeling developed through the articles of the magazine as 'ethnic journalism formulates representations of the group in ways that conform to how they see themselves, as a strategy for political advocacy and cultural preservation' (Lazarte-Morales, 2008, p. 1578).

Perceived in this light, it is thus not exceptional that media have often featured in fieldwork interactions, and one of the issues to consider in this chapter is what types of media are available and how these build representations. The discussion draws on Hall's (1990, p. 222) ideas of identity as 'never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation'. The importance of media representations has become commonplace in analysis of media:

it is in and through representations, for example, that members of the media audience are variously invited to construct a sense of who "we" are in relation to who "we" are not' (Cottle, 2000, p. 2).

Furthermore, media do not only reflect reality but also ‘create reality and normalise specific world-views or ideologies’ (Fürsich, 2010, p. 115).

Following the political change in 1989 Romanian media had to be reconceptualised (Gross, 2004) as a liberal market. Today both public and private institutions exist, and their content is tailored following international trends. An in-depth discussion of the media environment of Romania is outside the focus of this project, of interest is the relationship of minorities like Old Believers with the media. This analysis points to the difficulty of accurately reflecting diversity outlined by several scholars (see for instance Pietikäinen, 2003; Alia and Bull, 2005; Matsaganis, Katz and Ball-Rokeach, 2011; Bleich, Bloemraad and de Graauw, 2015).

As the use of media in its plural form (Cutter, 2012) suggests, the sources considered here vary, they include print, radio and television. The analysis presented in this chapter is comprised of various sources created ‘for’ / ‘by’ (Caspi and Elias, 2011) Old Believers as well as media ‘about’ them. Matsaganis, Katz and Ball-Rokeach (2011, p. 10, italics in original) have defined ethnic media as:

media produced *by* and *for* (a) immigrant, (b) ethnic, racial, and linguistic minorities, as well as (c) indigenous groups living in various countries across the world.

Matsaganis, Katz and Ball-Rokeach’s (2011) definition is too broad for my purposes here, as I consider media ‘for’ minorities follow different objectives and frame external representations. My discussion in this chapter uses a narrower definition that only includes sources produced ‘by’ Old Believers. The sources of media ‘for’ Old Believers, which will be treated separately, include the television and radio shows produced and broadcasted on public service channels, discussed in reference to the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages in section 5.1.

The last type of media considered here, is that created by Romanians ‘about’ the community including shows about Old Believers on private television (news and television shows) as well as print media (dailies and periodicals). As Old Believers are present in mainstream media from time to time, both at national and at local level, it is important to look at such productions where ‘the concept of “Other” permeates portrayals of ethnicity and divisions marked by ethnic (or pseudo-ethnic) boundaries’ (Alia and Bull, 2005, p. 6). These

representations are often infused by stereotypical views of ethnicity and often fail to capture diversity (Cottle, 2000), reflecting ‘dominant or preferred meanings’ (Hall, 1980, p. 123).

## 5.1 Legislation and Public Service Media

As an officially-recognised minority within Romanian legislation, the Old Believers benefit from the opportunities created by Romania’s participation in international treaties, such as the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (Council of Europe, 2010), signed by Romania on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1992. The Charter was transposed in Romania through the law 41/1994 (Parlamentul României, 1994), regulating the activity of the public-service media institutions, and the 504/2002 Audiovisual Law (Parlamentul României, 2002) which regulates the activity of all media. Both documents include provisions for national minorities. The former mentions that the programme of the public television should include shows in minority languages; the latter includes provisions regarding the supervising authority’s (*Consiliul Național al Audiovizualului* - National Audiovisual Council) role in monitoring representations of minorities.<sup>33</sup> The effect of these laws is limited as the international treaty does not prescribe how much air-time should be dedicated to minorities (Cormack, 2005). Moreover, the impact is lessened by the fact that, in Romania, public service institutions are not as popular as private channels. As a report monitoring the implementation of the Charter mentions, the presence of such materials is not driven by audience demand but by the public service nature of the channels (Centrul de Resurse pentru Diversitate Etnoculturală, 2009). The report also mentions the limited knowledge of national minorities’ representatives of media principles to induce significant policy change.

In Romania, *Societatea Română de Televiziune* (the National Television Society) and *Societatea Română de Radiodifuziune* (the National Radio Society) have a public service mission. The National Television Society, also known as TVR, has a wide range of television channels (e.g. TVR 1, TVR 2, TVR 3 or TVR+). The National Radio Society also has several radio channels, including local radio stations. Following the ratification of the public-service media law in 1994, representatives of the two institutions met with ethnic

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<sup>33</sup> I have found in *Zorile* one mention of an action taken against a journalist for misrepresenting the Old Believers in an article that mentioned the use of an Old Believer church for questionable activities. Whereas the article made no mention the persons implicated were Old Believers, the NGO found this article offensive.

representatives to discuss the integration of materials about ethnic groups in its television and radio programmes (Feodor, 2012a). From that moment on, dedicated TV programmes and radio shows have addressed national diversity. The 2015 report of TVR mentions that, in 2015, the ‘Other Minorities’<sup>34</sup> team produced 130 hours and 27 minutes of live broadcast and 82 more hours of rebroadcasting, dedicated to different minorities (Societatea Română de Televiziune, 2015). The monitoring report indicates Old Believers had 950.55 minutes, representing 7.43% of ethnic minorities’ total broadcasting time (Societatea Română de Televiziune, 2015), slightly lower than the total air time in 2014 (1,031.42 minutes) (Societatea Română de Televiziune, 2014).

The shows produced include *Conviețuiri (Cohabitations)*, *Europolis*, *Identități (Identities)*, *Toți împreună (All Together)* and *Cultura Minorităților (Minorities’ Culture)*. *Cohabitations* is a live weekly broadcasted on TVR 1 channel on Wednesdays (15:00-16:00) and *Europolis* is broadcasted on Tuesdays (13:00-14:00) on TVR 1. *Identities* used to be broadcasted Mondays and Wednesdays (14:30-15:00) on TVR 2, a segment replaced by *Minorities’ Culture* today, a show with the same remit. These shows are archived and can be viewed online on the website [www.tvrplus.ro](http://www.tvrplus.ro) (TVR+, 2017), or through digital applications for mobile devices (Societatea Română de Televiziune, 2014). The programmes include both reporting from past events, from festivals or regional manifestations, as well as live interviews with Old Believer representatives. Whenever an event of importance for Old Believers takes place, such as the opening of the exhibition described in chapters 7, a reportage is produced. Most often, the Old Believers invited to speak are CRLR representatives, rarely are other Old Believers invited on the set. For instance, at the beginning of the year, the NGO representatives present the major events planned for the upcoming year. A different type of reportages present portraits of different people, from artists to traditional Old Believers living in remote villages.

At declarative level, backed by the legislation mentioned above, the public television pays lip-service to minorities:

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<sup>34</sup> The institution has three different sections dedicated to minorities. The big minorities (i.e. Hungarian, German) have dedicated sections, whereas the ‘Other Minorities’ section lumps together the smaller groups in the country.

*Televiziunea publică are un spațiu important dedicat minorităților naționale, TVR demonstrează astfel, din nou, rolul pe care îl are în reprezentarea diversității naționale.*

[The public television has an important space dedicated to national minorities, TVR demonstrating this way, once again, the role it plays in presenting national diversity.] (Societatea Română de Televiziune, 2013, p. 9).

The timings chosen for these shows, however, indicate a low interest for the topic, as lunchtime midweek slots are not as popular as evening or weekend slots (Zbranca, 2009). As TVR mentions in its 2013 report, these ratings are not only due to the timing but also the shows' niche audience (Societatea Română de Televiziune, 2013). This is not an accessibility issue, these shows are usually in Romanian, and any foreign languages are subtitled; but illustrates the point raised by researchers that 'minority communities (of any kind) are by their very nature unrewarding audiences for the media' (Cormack, 2005, p. 108). In addition, the public television is not as popular as private channels, according to its 2014 report the television's popularity ranked sixth following Pro TV, Antena 1 and Antena 2, with spikes in audience during popular Eurovision contest or FIFA championships for which they have exclusive rights (Societatea Română de Televiziune, 2014).

On radio, the Old Believers benefit from radio programmes on two regional radios, Radio Constanța and Radio Iași (Zbranca, 2009). The main show dedicated to Old Believers is *Lipovan Russians* on Radio Iași, a channel broadcasted in the north part of the country and online. Broadcasted every Wednesday at 20:30, the 30-minute show is organised as a series of interviews. The host has always shown a respect for Old Believers, often describing them as religious or industrious people. He keeps a close connection with Old Believer representatives and documents events such as the iconography workshops organised (discussed here in chapter 6), or periodical events such as the Festival of Russian Poetry. As the centre of the show is in the Moldavia area (Iași city), the journalist often takes trips to visit local communities in neighbouring villages and cities, unlike mainstream media channels which focus on Bucharest and the South-East of Romania. The impact of this media is curtailed by the limited regional coverage as well as by the budget restrictions that do not allow travelling to more remote areas (Zbranca, 2009).

## 5.2 Ethnic Media

The Old Believers have two ethnic media publications, *Zorile* and *Kitej Grad*. Created in 1990, the name of the main magazine, *Zorile* ('dawn') was chosen for its symbolism (dawn brings a new day, thus a new beginning) and for its connection to both Russian and Romanian (this word is the same in both languages). The second publication, *Kitej Grad* [Kitej City]<sup>35</sup>, is a cultural magazine created at a later time. *Kitej Grad*'s editorial office has been in Iași (Romania) since the start and the magazine has a smaller impact in the community, it is not as popular as *Zorile* and does not have an online presence. *Zorile* (figure 5.1 on p. 104), managed from Bucharest, has a circulation of 3,000 copies, numbers similar to other ethnic media (Zbranca, 2009). Although the magazine had appeared before the signing of the Charter, it is mentioned in progress reports as part of the implementation of the Charter (Council of Europe, 2010). One issue worth mentioning is that, presumably due to the Charter, the magazine is supported by state funds provided by the *Departamentul pentru Relații Interetnice* (Department for Interethnic Relations) of the Romanian Government. As with other ethnic media publications, the magazine has very limited advertising and could not support its activity from sales (Zbranca, 2009).

In the first edition of *Zorile*, the editorial that opens the publication outlines the purpose of the publication 'as a site within which migrants and minorities can have voice and make claims' (Bleich, Bloemraad and de Graauw, 2015, p. 863). One of the prominent Old Believers intellectuals, no longer alive today, wrote:

*Fie ca 'Zorile' să devină simbolul intrării noastre în marea cultură și civilizație modernă! Fie ca ziarul să devină steaua noastră călăuzitoare ce ne va ajuta să găsim adevăratul nostru drum în noua istorie a României libere și democratice!*

[Be it so that 'Zorile' will become the symbol of entering in the big modern civilisation and culture! Be it that the newspaper becomes our guiding star that will help us find our true road in the new history of the free and democratic Romania.] (Evseev, 1990, p. 1).

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<sup>35</sup> The name of the magazine is based on the legend of the sunken city of Kitezh, discussed in the introduction of the thesis (chapter 1).



Dated November 1990, the new publication appeared after the liberalisation of media following the 1989 revolution and marks the beginning not only of this ethnic media publication but also of the activity of the NGO that represents the community to this day. Each edition of the magazine has 20 pages today, with articles published either in Russian or Romanian (originally all articles were mirrored in both languages). The content is balanced in terms of language use, with close to half articles written in Romanian, the ones considered for this analysis.<sup>36</sup>



Figure 5.1 Zorile magazine cover

<sup>36</sup> As explained in the methodology section (chapter 3) my linguistic skills have not allowed me to consider Russian sources, thus the analysis included here is incomplete, yet sufficient data was available in Romanian to identify major trends.

The magazine has also included across time supplements dedicated to religious holidays, women, local elections or literature. The magazine is published monthly, and distributed free of charge through NGO headquarters or local churches. Unlike mainstream media, which is heavily funded by advertising, as mentioned above, the magazine is funded from state funds. The advertisements I have come across in the 10 years' span of magazines reviewed were only connected with opportunities for Russian speakers, either job advertisements or university programmes, not the commercial advertisements present in any other type of media in Romania. The magazine thus, independent of commercial activity, only serves the interest of the NGO and its target audience, as the website of the magazine mentions, is formed by

*comunităților de ruși lipoveni din România, populației ruse din țara noastră, diasporei ruse a staroverilor din lumea întreagă, dar și românilor și vorbitorilor de limba română, tuturor celor care încearcă să afle cine sunt rușii lipoveni și care este istoria lor.*

[the communities of Lipovan Russians from Romania, the Russian population in our country, the Russian diaspora of starovery in the whole world, but also Romanians and Romanian-speakers, everyone who wants to find out who the Lipovan Russians are and what is their history] (Redacția Zorile, 2014).

The collection analysed in this chapter is available online (Redacția Zorile, 2014) and as researchers have mentioned, archives are useful (Guyot, 2007) as both community members and outsiders can access information. Online archives extend the readership of the magazine, reaching people that cannot acquire the printed edition, and now each new edition is announced on the official Facebook page that acts as the main social media channel for CRLR as well.

To mark its anniversaries, people have reflected over time on the purpose of the journal, often perceived as representative of the community, a promoter of culture and community:

*Nu poate fi ocolită excepționala contribuție a publicației 'Zorile' la evidențierea bogăției spiritualității și viguroasei vitalități ale acestei atât de interesante etnii din spațiul românesc.*

[One cannot bypass the exceptional contribution of ‘Zorile’ highlighting the spiritual richness and vigorous vitality of this very interesting ethnic group in the Romanian space.] (Barbă, 2005, p. 2).

Ad Georgiou argues, media open ‘spaces where identities are mobilised and to a significant extent shaped’ (Georgiou, 2013, p. 81). Therefore, echoing Hall’s (1990) ideas on representation, another article connects identity with representation, considering that the magazine closely represents the community.

*Ele se constituie drept păstrătoare de memorie ale unei comunități etnice atât de bogate în tradiții pitorești, cutume și valori spirituale cu o față specifică deosebită. Meditând asupra istoriei și existenței rușilor lipoveni, putem sintetiza că pentru ei au fost și mai sunt definitorii credința, cumpătarea, puritatea sufletească și curățenia trupească (v. banea), hărnicia, toleranța, legătura ancestrală cu glia, cu stihia apelor fluviale și marine, cu nostalgia patriei istorice și fidelitatea față de patria adoptivă.*

[They [the two publications *Zorile* and *Kitej Grad*] are preservers of memory of an ethnic community so rich in scenic traditions, customs and distinguished spiritual values. Meditating upon the history and existence of Lipovan Russians, we can summarise that for them defining elements are belief, temperance, spiritual and bodily (see banea<sup>37</sup>) purity, diligence, ancestral connection with the land, with the ghosts of rivers and seas, the nostalgia for the historic homeland and loyalty for the adoptive homeland.] (Barbă, 2009, p. 2).

In another anniversary issue, Old Believers from across the country wrote congratulatory notes. The longevity of the magazine was hailed as well, contributors praised the fact that its appearance offered a voice outside the community:

*Cînd a apărut primul număr al Zorilor, în noiembrie 1990, mi-am spus că, în sfârșit, și noi, rușii lipoveni, am început să vorbim în mass media românească și că vocea*

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<sup>37</sup> The Old Believers houses have traditionally included a sauna as well, and its use is linked with purity rituals (Danilov, 2009).

*noastră se va auzi de aici încolo. Iată că nu m-am înșelat, Zorile ajungând, după aproape 20 de ani, la 200 de apariții.*

[When the first number of *Zorile* appeared, in November 1990, I told myself that finally, we, Lipovan Russians, have started speaking in Romanian mass – media and that our voice will be heard from now on. Behold, I was not wrong, and *Zorile* has reached, after almost 20 years, 200 editions.] (S.V., 2009, p. 2).

As ‘culture and history are the substance of ethnicity’ (Nagel, 1994, p. 161) it comes as little surprise thus, given the considerations mentioned before, that the magazine reflects on both themes.

*Oricine răsfoiește cele două sute cincizeci de numere ale publicației sărbătorite va găsi în ele suficient material pentru o veritabilă enciclopedie a spiritualității lipovenești din ultimele două decenii, va putea reconstitui, în bună măsură, istoria grupului etnic de care aparținem, va culege date prețioase despre tradițiile, obiceiurile și, de ce nu, apucăturile noastre.*

[Whoever browses the 250 numbers of the celebrated publication will find enough material for an authentic encyclopaedia of Lipovan spirituality in the last two decades, and can reconstitute, in good measure, the history of the ethnic group that we belong to, collect precious data about our traditions, customs, and why not, our manners.] (Ivanov, 2013, p. 2).

However, this voice has limited reach as an overwhelming majority of readers are Old Believers, and the magazine’s impact in the general media is limited. In what follows is some analysis of the major themes identified.

### **5.2.1 Religion**

Both mainstream and ethnic media present the Old Believers as religious people, yet, in the former this is often reduced to stereotypes and factual mistakes. Interventions of Old Believers in mainstream media are framed by comments from presenters or narrators, which build images centred on the special nature of this ethnic group. Depictions of

minorities ‘are often entrenched and predefined ways of portraying Others’ (Fürsich, 2010, p. 120) and the presenters often describe the Old Believers as religious people:

*rușii lipoveni știu cel mai bine că fericirea începe de la Dumnezeu*

[Lipovan Russians know best that happiness starts from God] (TVR+, 2016a).

In another introduction of a *Cohabitations* reportage, the presenter described the group in terms of religion again, using this time a more poetical expression:

*în ochii lor râd ochii lui Dumnezeu*

[in their eyes, the eyes of God are laughing] (TVR+, 2014).

The religiosity of the group is reiterated time and time again in the presentation of the community, in the case of the national television there is a tone of respect for their superior spirituality, as

*pentru rușii lipoveni legătura cu religia este una foarte strânsă*

[for Lipovan Russians the link with religion is very close] (TVR+, 2016b).

One of the themes that often manages to infiltrate in the news of other mainstream media as well as local media is that of the religious winter holidays, Christmas and New Year. News covering winter holidays follow a typical structure: religious service, food, costume and carolling. These reports often discuss the Julian calendar, emphasising the different timings:

*Abia aseară rușii lipoveni din Brăila au sărbătorit trecerea în noul an. Au sărbătorit prima zi din an cu cântece și bucate alese.*

[It was only last night that the Lipovans from Brăila celebrated the New Year. They celebrated the first day of the year with songs and delicious food.] (Kanal D, 2016).

Building narratives on stereotypes, sometimes these shows attribute elements of Russianness to these ritual meals that have little in common with day to day reality. For several TV stations, the news reports included mentions of the drink present on tables as

vodka, irrespective of the commonality of this beverage in the country.<sup>38</sup> Playing on the exoticism of these holidays, on these occasions, journalists ask Old Believers to say something in Russian as well, to address fellow Old Believers.

Another common mention in short television news reports is the costume, which is often presented in simplistic terms, with no mention of distinctive elements such as the ‘*poias*’ (the braid) that would not be familiar to all audiences instead general details are offered:

*La sărbători lipovenii se îmbracă în port popular. Femeile poartă basmale și rochii brodate iar tinerii o cingătoare din lână.*

[On holidays, Lipovans dress in folk costume. Women wear kerchiefs and embroidered dresses, and youngsters a woollen coloured belt.] (Antena 1, 2014).

One of the main roles of ethnic media is to counteract ‘the minority stereotyped representation prevailing in the majority media’ (Caspi and Elias, 2011, p. 63). In a similar fashion, Old Believers’ interventions on public television, sometimes try to correct stereotypes:

*Pentru că da, există lipoveni care nu sunt și nu au fost pescari, și nici nu locuiesc în Delta, de pildă părinții mei.*

[Because yes, there are Lipovans who are not fishermen, and they do not live in the Delta, such as my parents.] (Preda, 2015).

In another instance, an Old Believer interviewed for a musical show, which aimed to present authentic traditions, mentioned in his description of Old Believers,

*De rit, acest cuvânt neînțeles multor crainici la televiziune ... și confundă stilul cu ritul. Ritul presupune cu totul altceva. Noi continuăm și astăzi după ce la mijlocul secolului al 17-lea în Rusia a avut loc o reformă religioasă, pe care noi n-am primit-o, strămoșii noștri n-au primit-o, noi continuăm să păstrăm și astăzi ceea ce Rusia a primit de la creștinare.*

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<sup>38</sup> Vodka is not a popular drink in Romania, especially for poorer people, as it is expensive.

[In terms of rite, this word that is misunderstood by many TV presenters who confuse style and rite.... The rite is something else. We continue today, after in mid 17<sup>th</sup> century a reform took place, which we rejected, our ancestors rejected it, we continue to preserve what Russia received at its Christianisation.] (TVR 2, 2014).

Print ethnic media similarly, but more subtly, builds the image of a group whereby spirituality is an essential trait. Old Belief, as the official religion, features strongly across the articles included in the magazine, as a defining as well as bonding element:

*Știm cu toții că unul din factorii care ne-a unit și ne-a menținut ca etnie a fost relația strânsă pe care rușii lipoveni o au cu biserica, care a fost și rămâne principalul element de coeziune al comunităților de staroveri din România.*

[We all know that one of the elements that has united, kept us as an ethnic group is the close relationship that Old Believers have with church, which has been and remains the main cohesive element for starovery communities from Romania.] (Anonymous, 2010b, p. 2).

As mentioned in chapter 4.1, in 2007 Old Belief was officially recognised by the state and as such could benefit from dedicated state funds. Reflecting on this important landmark an article mentioned:

*Pentru noi, rușii lipoveni ortodocși de rit vechi, dreptul de a ne practica ritualurile specifice cultului nostru și de a ne păstra credința religioasă este sfânt și intangibil.*

[For us, Lipovan Russians old rite orthodox, the right to practice the specific rituals and keep our religious belief is holy and intangible.] (Ivanov, 2007, p. 7).

From this time on, yearly articles covered issues related to funds dedicated to the repairs of churches from the Ministry of Culture and Cults.<sup>39</sup> For instance, the quote below belongs to the parliamentary representative of Old Believers, the deputy, outlined as an argument for the distribution of funds to churches for the given year:

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<sup>39</sup> As I had explained in chapter 1, the name of the Ministry has changed recently.

*Strămoșii noștri au părăsit Rusia mai mult din motive de credință. După ce s-au așezat pe teritoriul actual al României, ei au construit lăcașe sfinte. Biserica a fost acea instituție care ne-a unit, ne-a ținut laolaltă, ne-a determinat să păstrăm limba, obiceiurile, tradițiile și credința străbunilor noștri.*

[Our ancestors left Russia on the grounds of belief. After they settled on the current territory of Romania, they built holy sanctuaries. The church was the institution that brought us together, instigated us to preserve language, customs, traditions and the faith of our ancestors.] (Ignat, 2007, p. 3).

If the idea of an unwavering belief was promoted in the earlier editions analysed here, in the last years a discourse of loss, resulting from societal changes, appeared in articles.

*Dacă acum vreo 20 de ani viața curată, tradițiile, credința erau rațiunea noastră de a fi, în ultimii ani începem să ne aplatizăm, să ne globalizăm adică să devenim cineva și nimeni în același timp.*

[If 20 years ago clean living, traditions, faith were our reason to be, in the last years we have begun to flatten, to globalise, and to become someone and no one at the same time.] (Omega, 2009, p. 6).

The material side of religion is also present in the articles, with various pages dedicated to icons and the inherited books commonplace in Old Believers houses.

*Biserica – stâlpul de lumină în jurul căruia gravitau sătenii a stat neclintită în sufletul lor. Le-a dat putere, forță, energie, speranță. Icoanele și hainele bisericesti pe care le-au adus cu sine din prigoana rusească – au în casă locul lor de cinste.*

[The church, the light pillar towards which villagers gravitated, stood unflinching in their soul. It gave them power, strength, energy, hope. The icons and church clothes they brought with them when escaping Russian persecution have a place of honour in their houses.] (Tudosă and Parfon, 2007, p. 15).



Ethnic media thus allows for a more nuanced presentation than the mainstream media, both in terms of the issues covered and the acceptance of weakening of interest in spirituality, whereas mainstream media often insist on the preservation of belief.

### 5.2.2 *Language*

The preoccupation for language as a central element of ethnic identity is not surprising here given its link with identity (Nic Craith, 2012b). Considerations on language in mainstream media are often reduced to the idea of preservation, for instance in a TV show Grigore Leșe (2014), a famous folk musician, mentioned that Old Believers ‘stubbornly’ cling to their language. At times, some reportages created for the national television are narrated in Russian, with subtitles for non-Russian speakers, but their occurrence is not very common. The idea of a gradual fading, a loss, was highlighted several times throughout a documentary dedicated to Old Believers, created by an Old Believer journalist for TVR, linking again language and identity:

*Încet, încet tradiția noastră lipovenească se pierde. Noi am făcut prima greșeală că nu am vorbit cu copiii limba maternă și generațiile viitoare nu au vorbit nici atât și deci tinde spre dispariție.*

[Slowly, slowly, our Lipovan tradition is disappearing. We made the first mistake as we did not speak with children in our maternal language, and next generation will speak even less and so it leans towards extinction.] (Preda, 2015).

The main problem is that language skills for the younger generations are not as solid as for the older Old Believers:

*În tinerele familii, limba maternă, rusa medievală, ușor, ușor se pierde, iar acolo unde se mai aude e amestecată cu elemente locale. Noile generații de lipoveni vorbesc acum românește și nu mai înțeleg limba bunicilor.*

[In young families, the maternal language, medieval Russian, is slowly, slowly disappearing, and where it is heard it is mixed with local elements. The new generations of Lipovans speak Romanian now and do not understand the language of their grandparents.] (Preda, 2015).

In print ethnic media, language features routinely. The link between language and identity seems to be embedded in the consciousness of the community due to its essential role in the preservation of ethnic identity (Vișan, 2006a) and a means of belonging to the Russian diaspora (Haralambie, 2012). Its vitality is linked with the safeguarding of identity and traditions

*Pentru noi – rușii lipoveni – problema limbii și a credinței a fost, este și va fi vitală.*  
[For us – Lipovan Russians – the problem of language and belief is and will always be, vital.] (Jipa-Rubanov, 2005, p. 11).

Defined as ‘ancestral language’ (Neumann, 2015a, p. 11), the articles discuss about a duty to preserve it:

*Responsabilitatea atât spirituală cât și cea culturală, laică este a noastră, a tuturor!*  
[We, all of us have the spiritual as well as cultural, secular responsibility.] (Feodor, 2009, p. 9).

As Nagel has pointed out, ‘efforts to revitalize language and increase usage are often major cultural reconstruction projects’ (Nagel, 1994, p. 162). These efforts are presented through the consistent coverage of advocacy efforts of CRLR and Russian teachers. Such advocacy efforts include the organisation of regional, national language contests and participation in international contests that take place in Russia every three years; which are reported in the ethnic media continuously. Other initiatives for language promotion include organising camps for language contest winners both in Romania and in Russia.

Language gives Old Believers a sense of belonging and is often described in romantic terms, its use is linked with a sense of ‘*mândrie pentru cultura și tradițiile strămoșești*’ [pride for ancestral culture and traditions] (Neculai, 2014, p. 7). As Ignatieff argues ‘it is language, more than land and history, that provides the essential form of belonging, which is to be understood’ (Ignatieff, 1993, p. 10) and Old Believers seem to be aware of this:

*Cunoscând limba strămoșilor, poți să simți, să gândești și să te manifesti ca un membru împlinit al acelei etnii.*

[Knowing the language of ancestors, you can feel, think and act as a complete member of this ethnic group.] (Neumann, 2012, p. 8).

Teachers act as promoters for linguistic vitality, motivating students to learn the language by emphasising its importance, for instance a teacher

*ne-a făcut să conștientizăm în decursul acestor ani de studiu că nu ne putem uita niciodată rădăcinile și că tradiția și obiceiurile noastre nu trebuie să dispară, pentru că ‘Limba este patria noastră’.*

[made us understand during the years of study that we cannot ever forget our roots and that our tradition and our customs should not disappear, as ‘language is our homeland’] (Vasile, 2011, p. 19).

In another article a dedicated Russian teacher is praised as

*un om care i-a făcut pe mulți elevi să iubească limba lor strămoșească - o carte de noblete a unui neam, îi ajută pe copii să vorbească în limba în care gândesc!*

[a man who determined a lot of students to love their ancestral language – a book of nobility of a people, he supports the children to speak in the language they think in!] (Moldovan, 2013).

At times, the requests for language learning come from parents, whose advocacy efforts lead to changes in provision of maternal language classes, a teacher reported that

*părinții au spus: ‘... dar cu ai noștrii veți face rusă, nu-i așa?!’ Lucrul acesta m-a bucurat foarte mult.*

[the parents asked: ‘... but with our [children] you will do Russian, won’t you?’ This has made me very happy.] (Frol, 2010, p. 5).

Others, however, note that some parents do not want to register children for Russian classes, invoking crowded schedules, or the interest in more popular languages such as English, French or German. In response to this reticence, prominent intellectual Old Believers linguists use the space of articles to advocate for the learning of Russian in schools:

*Este un apel dar și o ofertă adresată atât părinților cât și copiilor ruși lipoveni care încă nu s-au înscris să studieze limba rusă maternă, să înceapă demersurile necesare pentru studierea limbii noastre strămoșesti.*

[It is a call and an offer addressed to parents and children Lipovan Russians who have not yet registered to study Russian as maternal language, to start the necessary steps to study our ancestral language] (Crăciun, 2010, p. 17).

As Cormack observed, ‘appeals for minority languages are often based on appeals to tradition, to traditional communities, to traditional culture’ (Cormack, 2005, p. 119). Discourses from the representatives of the NGO, covered in articles, often voice concern for the state of Russian linguistic skills. For instance, in an event the president of a local NGO branch

*a subliniat importanța studiului limbii materne în păstrarea tradițiilor și obiceiurilor specifice etniei noastre, eforturile pe care le face guvernul și conducerea centrală a CRLR [...] pentru a asigura cadrul legal și financiar privind desfășurarea în condiții optime a acestor ore.*

[underlined the importance the study of maternal language has in the preservation of traditions and customs specific to our ethnic group, the efforts that the government and the central administration of CRLR make [...] to ensure the legal and financial framework so that classes are conducted in optimal conditions] (Neumann, 2015b, p. 30).

Yet, such optimal conditions are not frequently met, although the NGO makes efforts to develop teaching skills by facilitating participation in national and international workshops and programs. Among the problems mentioned are the lack of teaching materials and the lack of younger Russian specialists, as well as the diminishing number of students due to migration. Issues such as materials that are available to teachers, or new discussions with the Ministry of Education are also extensively covered in some magazine numbers.

In their efforts to promote the advantages of learning Russian, a common theme that emerged is that of economic attractiveness for young people, a common theme in ethnic

media (Cormack 2007). Economic arguments to mobilise learning include references to a projected future when Russian economic connections with Romania will be strengthened:

*Începe să pătrundă capitalul rusesc și se cer cunoscători de limbă rusă.*

[The Russian capital begins to penetrate [the Romanian market] and Russian speakers are needed]. (Zenovei, 2006, p. 5).

In another instance, the popular multinational companies are presented as reservoirs of opportunities for people who have linguistic skills (Anonymous, 2010a). Despite these efforts, however, mentions of language loss are also found in many instances, especially in the more recent years:

*Limba rusă, cândva limbă maternă, mai răsună doar arareori în localitățile, în cartierele sau chiar în casele rușilor lipoveni. Limba română a devenit, din păcate, un mijloc de comunicare mult mai eficient pentru lipovenii de orice vârstă.*

[The Russian language, once the maternal language, is rarely heard in localities, neighbourhoods, even houses of Lipovan Russians. The Romanian language has become, unfortunately, a more efficient means of communication for Lipovans of all ages.] (Timofte, 2010, p. 16).

The theme of language loss appeared steadily across these editions considered, and it was perceived as having deep negative consequences linked with

*pericolului de a se pierde specificul sufletului nostru prin neutilizarea limbii ruse în familie*

[the danger to lose the specificity of our soul through the failure to use Russian in the family] (Erastov, 2013, p. 13).

Similar to the findings of Nic Craith (2012b, p. 97) who noted that in her study that ‘the language of the home was an important focal point in all of the instances I dealt with’, it is the family that influences the vitality of the language, and (as it is at times enunciated) external efforts need to be matched with internal efforts:

*Mai încercăm să cântăm dar puțini știu ce cântă. Întrebam și eu o cunoștință: Kak tebe zvatí? Iar ca răspuns: Mă lași! Noi încă mai știm limba noastră maternă, dar după generația noastră nu mai știu.*

[We try to sing but few know what we are singing. I asked an acquaintance: ‘Kak tebe zvat’? [What is your name?] And the answer: ‘Beat it!’ We still know our maternal language but after our generation they do not know any longer.] (Frol, 2009, p. 5).

On an increasingly-discussed background of diminishing numbers of active believers and loss of linguistic skills, emphatic appeals were directed towards promoting the religious language, Slavonic:

*Este de datoria noastră și trebuie să facem un efort comun să ne cunoaștem limba de cult, nu numai pentru frumusețea și sacritatea ei, dar și pentru respectul care se cuvine a fi dat înaintașilor noștri, care prin jertfă s-au străduit de secole să păstreze cu sfințenie neschimbate textele sacre și Sfânta noastră Tradiție.*

[It is our duty to make an effort to preserve our religious language, not only for its beauty and sanctity, but for the respect owed to our ancestors, that through sacrifice fought for centuries to sacredly keep unchanged the holy texts and our holy Tradition.] (Feodor, 2012b, p. 16).

In mainstream media, some efforts are made to present minority languages, yet the efficiency of such programmes is truncated by the limited air time as well as the limited audience. The main role of purveyor of language remains in the remit of ethnic media.

### **5.2.3 Identity**

Several of the TV shows broadcasted in mainstream media present the activities of young people, who are seen as active agents of ethnic preservation, as ‘*promotorii identității culturale*’ [promoters of cultural identity] (TVR+, 2015). To this end, a first edition of ‘Radio School: Minorities Live’ was organised in 2015 aiming to train ‘ethnic journalists’, as journalists of ethnic background have been named in the project. Some isolated Old Believer journalists work in the public service channels, both television and radio and

produce materials about the community. A particular voice within TVR is that of an Old Believer reporter who works in the ‘Other minorities’ team and has recently produced a four hours’ documentary on Old Believers: *Filipovenii și cazacii lui Nekrasov* [Fillipovtsy and the Nekrasov Cossacks] (Preda, 2015). The documentary extensively discusses the history of Old Belief with comments from Romanian, Ukrainian and Russian historians. The documentary was screened in different cities after the initial broadcast and its presentation positioned the producer as an insider that considers a vital theme, that of identity:

*Botoșăneancă născută și crescută în lipovenime, Ana Preda a mizat pe ceea ce le lipsește oamenilor cel mai mult: identitatea. Căutarea în trecut și nevoia de a afla cine sunt, de unde vin, de ce sunt așa cum sunt.*

[Botoșăneancă<sup>40</sup> born and raised in the Lipovan community, Ana Preda counted on what people lack most: identity. The search in the past and the need to find out who they are, where they come from, and why they are as they are.<sup>41</sup>] (Tonita, 2016).

Elements of Russianness (chapter 6), such as the kerchief, ‘*sbornik*’ (the married woman’s cape) or ‘*lestovka*’ (the rosary), were used in visual animations that separate the sequences of the documentary. Moving back and forth from personal to community level, the documentary blends both past and present, in an effort to define Old Believers. In her quest to present Old Believers, the narrator speaks against stereotypes widely circulated in the media

*Lipoveni în România nu înseamnă numai deltă și pescuit, bărboși habotnici, femei albe, grase și frumoase.*

[Lipovans in Romania does not only mean the Delta, fishing, bearded religious men, white women, fat and beautiful.] (Preda, 2015).

The narrator also notes that globalisation and migration are the main drivers for the loss of identity. Inspired by her parents, she feels compelled to take on a personal mission to preserve identity:

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<sup>40</sup> A person from Botoșani city.

<sup>41</sup> Unlike English, in Romanian sentences do not necessarily need a verb.

*Tot ei m-au învățat să pastrez, dar mai ales să transmit mai departe identitatea staroveră.*

[They [parents] taught me not only to preserve, but especially to pass on the starovery identity.] (Preda, 2015).

Video footage accompanies the narratives of historians, mainly sequences from Russian films dedicated to the Schism, such as *Raskol*. Moreover, an Old Believer choir group's recording is presented in intermediary moments.

In this analysis, I have come across several other television reports narrated by the Old Believer journalist and I have noted how, contrary to other media, she accepts that traditions and beliefs have changed as

*Realitățile cu care s-au confruntat de-a lungul timpului nu le-au lăsat nealterate.*

[the realities they have faced over time did not leave them unchanged.] (Preda, 2013).

Identity work is another major theme emerging from various printed editions of *Zorile* magazine as well, as it is a well-recognised fact that ethnic media 'reinforce ethnic and cultural identity' (Matsaganis, Katz and Ball-Rokeach, 2011, p. 55). This comes as no surprise as it is one of the main aims of the NGO,

*organizație aplecată mereu spre rezolvarea nevoilor populației ruso-lipovene, spre păstrarea, continuitatea și promovarea culturii sale, spre menținerea identității etnice și rezolvarea problemelor sociale și umanitare a celor care, trăind și trudind în condiții grele, sunt cetățeni români de etnie rusă.*

[a organisation concerned with the needs of Lipovan Russian population, to preserve, continue and promote its culture, preserve ethnic identity, and solve social and humanitarian problems of those who have lived and worked under difficult conditions for hundreds of years, who are Romanian citizens of Russian ethnicity.] (Manolescu, 2005, p. 2).



The magazine's influence in creating a sense of self for Old Believers is sometimes reflected in responses from readers:

*Sincer: nici nu știam că lipovenii sunt ruși-ruși adevărați!*

[Honestly, I did not know that Lipovans are Russian, real Russians!] (Danciu - Petniceanu, 2005, p. 5).

The articles also periodically revisit the official name of this group. The Lipovan name, used in legislation, is a term some of them consider conflicted, as it is associated with negative human traits (Varona, 2007). Historic arguments regarding the origins of the name (discussed in chapter 4.1) are queried, and a recurrent argument presented is that the church has not accepted this name, and uses 'starovery' or 'starobrjadcy' instead, to define Old Believers in terms of belief. Difference is also expressed through reference to religion, and the erosion of belief is dangerous, as

*un aspect care ne diferențiază ca etnie și cu care ne identificăm este și religia.*

[an element that differentiates us as an ethnic group and identify with is religion.] (Amelian, 2007b, p. 12).

Offering a space to correct images presented outside the community, some articles explicitly challenge perceptions:

*Staroverii au fost acuzați de ritualism, dar nu barba sau semnul crucii făcut cu două degete îl fac pe starover ceea ce este, ci credința nestrămutată în ceea ce ele simbolizează.*

[The starovery were accused of ritualism but it is not the beard or the crossing with two fingers that make the starover who he is, but his unshakeable faith in what these symbolise.] (Anore, 2013, p. 8).

Some take a normative narrative, linking identity with religion and with a duty to uphold to the belief of the ancestors, carried through time:

*Biserica și tradițiile au avut dintotdeauna un rol hotărâtor în păstrarea identității noastre iar participarea la slujbele religioase este o datorie. Majoritatea rușilor lipoveni au primit în copilărie o educație religioasă strictă iar credința puternică a staroverilor ruși s-a transmis din generație în generație.*

[The church and traditions have always had a decisive role in preserving our identity and participating in religious services is a duty. Most Lipovan Russians received a strict religious education and the powerful belief of Russian starovery was transmitted from generation to generation.] (C.A., 2009, p. 6).

As for the feelings generated by the Old Believer identity, one of the themes often highlighted revolves around pride, maybe in an attempt to counter the pervasive negative attitudes discussed with informants during fieldwork (mentioned in the following chapters):

*Mă mândresc că port și sărut crucea cu opt colțuri, pentru care s-au jertfit înaintașii noștri, pentru păstrarea vechii credințe lăsată moștenire încă de la creștinarea Rusiei de către cneazul Vladimir.*

[I am proud that I wear the 8-corner cross that our ancestors have sacrificed themselves for, for keeping the Old faith inherited from the Christianisation of Russia by Prince Vladimir.] (Anore, 2011b, p. 6).

The normative aspect of this media channel, as promoter for the preservation of Old Believer heritage, appears time and time again, sometimes in appeal to pathos and heroic resistance in difficult times:

*Fiecare lipovean trebuie să devină un propovăduitor al culturii și al istoriei noastre, pline de curaj, demnitate și credință adevărată. Mândria noastră este că noi am rezistat ca etnie în condițiile cele mai vitrege posibile, înconjuțați nu întotdeauna de dragoste și simpatie, făcând un efort extraordinar de a exista fizic, social, istoric.*

[Each Lipovan should become a preacher of our culture and our history full of courage, dignity and true faith. Our pride is that we resisted as an ethnic group in the harshest conditions possible, not always surrounded by love and sympathy,

making an extraordinary effort to exist physically, socially, historically.] (Denis-Condrat, 2005, p. 9).

Bitter remarks are dedicated to those who hide their Old Believer identity, and some articles explicitly condemn such practices:

*Chiar și cei dintre noi care vor să-și disimuleze originile, în încercarea de a se pierde în masa majorității, simt, în momentele lor de sinceritate intimă, că prin venele lor curge un alt fel de sânge.*

[Even those of us that want to dissimulate their origins, in their attempt to lose oneself in the majority feel, in their moments of intimate honesty, that through their veins a different blood is running.] (Ivanov, 2009, p. 2).

Similar to the discussion on language, articles referring to identity posit young people as a problematic group as well as they refuse to disclose their identity due to discrimination (Parfon, 2006). The discourse on identity is entangled with that about traditions, as

*Acasă înseamnă tradiții, obiceiuri, limba maternă, toate transmise din generație în generație.*

[Home means traditions, customs, maternal language, transmitted from generation to generation.] (Zaiț, 2007, p. 12).

On this topic, again, it is ethnic media that analyse this in-depth, rather than mainstream media for which the complex terrain of identity-work is not as attractive. Calls for preservation of identity and the doubts that modernity possesses are reflected in the mainstream media as well, but only in those materials prepared by Old Believer journalists who have a good knowledge of the community.

#### **5.2.4 Belonging**

An emotional connection to their homeland is salient in many of the references across the themes coming across from *Zorile*. As explained in an anniversary edition marking 20 years since the publication was launched:

*O atenție deosebită se acordă Rusiei – patria istorică a rușilor lipoveni, trecutului ei și vieții actuale, dar și relațiilor româno-ruse.*

[A particular attention is paid to Russia – the historic homeland of Lipovan Russians, its past and actuality, as well as to Romanian – Russian relationships.] (Moldovan, 2015, p. 4).

Moreover, the two publications are associated with the World Association of Russian Press, and in 2012 the Russian government offered *Zorile* a diploma for its efforts to preserve the Russian language and culture outside Russia. In another instance, an article mentioned an Old Believer academic received the Pushkin Medal and a 'Friendship Order' diploma was offered to the political representative of Old Believers on similar grounds. A tactical interest to preserve the connection with the community, is exhibited through such actions, which beginning with 2006 became part of the official Russian diaspora, an event that was perceived as an opportunity as it

*va atrage după sine numeroase utilități de ordin spiritual și un alt tip de colaborare.*  
[will attract many spiritual and other types of collaboration opportunities.] (Dolghin, 2007, p. 4).

The magazine includes reports from participants in international meetings of Russian diaspora or academic conferences dedicated to Russian language and culture. The emotional connection with the homeland pervades through many articles:

*Un om, în viață, nu-și poate alege sau schimba 2 lucruri: părinții și patria. Aceste 2 lucruri le acceptăm necondiționat, pentru că fac parte din ființa noastră. Dragostea de patrie este cel mai nobil sentiment pe care-l poate simți ființa omenească.*

[A man cannot choose 2 things in his life: his parents and his homeland. These two things we accept unconditionally, as they are part of our being. Love for homeland is the most noble feeling that a human being can feel.] (Neculai, 2014, p. 7).

The cultural and political theme of ‘mother Russia’ is linked by Haarmann to a ‘symbolic Russianness’ (Haarmann, 2002) that has little to do with current realities, rooted in centuries of stereotyping, yet it enthuses some Old Believers views. In a similar vein, Old Believer academics discuss a ‘Russian soul’ (Danilov, 2009).

*Eram destul de mică atunci când am început să realizez că sunt altfel decât ceilalți, că limba pe care o vorbesc acasă nu e compatibilă cu cea pe care o aud la școală sau pe stradă, că biserica mea este altfel decât cea a colegilor mei, că am altfel de sărbători și o cultură diferită. De atunci m-a cuprins o sete nestăvilită de Rusia și de tot ce e rusesc.*

[I was quite young when I started to realise that I am different from the others, that the language I speak at home is not compatible with that heard at school or on the street, that my church is different from my colleagues, that I have different holidays and a different culture. Since then I developed an insatiable taste for Russia and all that is Russian.] (Ivanov, 2010).

Referring to the hymn dedicated to Old Believers (created by the NGO) which mentions that Russia should forgive the Old Believers, another author took a normative discourse:

*Rusia trebuie iubită, e patria strămoșilor noștri, este și va fi țara sufletului nostru, dar nu cred că este corect ca ea să ne ierte pentru ceva de care nu suntem vinovați. Noi i-am iertat demult.*

[Russia must be loved, it is the homeland of our ancestors, it is and will be the land of our soul, but I do not think it is right for them to forgive us for something that we are not guilty of. We forgave them long ago.] (Anore, 2011b, p. 11).

The Russian connection is marked in annual official ceremonies, covered in *Zorile*, such as 9<sup>th</sup> of May – the ‘Day of Victory against Fascism’, or November 4<sup>th</sup> – ‘the Day of National Unity’, June 12<sup>th</sup> - ‘Russia’s National Day’. These events are then reported in dedicated segments of the national television programmes mentioned above as well. An openness from Russia’s side is also mentioned as shown by Dmitry Medvedev, at that time president, in a meeting of Russian diaspora:

*Urând celor prezenți un călduros bun venit pe pământul natal, domnia sa a ținut să precizeze că Rusia, în calitate de mare putere mondială, care dispune de resurse energetice însemnate, nu-i poate uita pe rușii din diaspora, că în secolul 21 are nevoie de potențialul rușilor de pretutindeni pentru a merge mai departe pe drumul progresului și al prosperității.*

[Welcoming everyone on the motherland, he [the Russian president] wanted to clarify that Russia, as a big world power, which has large energetic resources, cannot forget the Russians from the diaspora, that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it needs the potential of Russians everywhere to go further on the road of progress and prosperity.] (Radion, 2010, p. 14).

References to the past are central to community building and ‘the past is being used here as a resource’ (Cohen, 1985, p. 99), subjected to ‘interpretive reconstructions’ (Cohen, 1985, p. 102). There is a ‘thirst’ for understanding the Old Believers past, manifested throughout the magazine. One article argues that there are not enough writings about the past (Ivanov, 2009, p. 2). This past, putatively unique to their community, grounds their identities:

*Aș îndrăzni să afirm că ne definește exact ceea ce a fost ignorat atât de noi, cât și de străbunii noștri, și anume trecutul! Limba, credința, folclorul sunt valori comune cu poporul rus, în schimb istoria este numai și numai a noastră, a grupului nostru etnic. Până acum ignorat sau tăinuit, acest trecut, neînsemnat pentru unii sau deranjant pentru alții, este fantastic pentru noi, lipovenii, și singurul care ne face să fim deosebiți și poate ... interesanți.*

[I would dare to say that exactly what both we and our ancestors ignored defines us, namely our past. The language, belief, folklore are common values with the Russian people, however, history is only ours, our ethnic group. Until now ignored or concealed, unimportant for some or disturbing for others, it is fantastic for us, Lipovans, and the only thing that makes us special and maybe ... interesting.] (Fenoghen, 2006, p. 8).

The most salient reference to the past is that of the Schism in the church that triggered the move of Old Believers, presented time and time again as background of heroic actions:

*Acest element a stat la baza prigoanei împotriva strămoșilor noștri care au reușit să fugă, care au avut tăria de caracter și credința pentru a renunța la averi și la meleagurile natale pentru a-și urma liderii spirituali în scopul preservării credinței străbune.*

[This element was the basis of persecution against our ancestors who managed to run, and had the strength of character and belief to give up their wealth in their homeland to follow their spiritual leaders to preserve the ancestral faith.] (Ihorov, 2005, p. 15).

This past was embodied in heroic figures such as Boyar Morozovna or Avvakum, whose lives were lost during the turbulent times of the Schism. Such characters have the allure of mythical figures, such as Avvakum who stood his ground and

*tortura nu a putut învinge voința de fier a curajosului preot.*

[torture did not defeat the iron will of the courageous priest.] (Chirilă, 2012, p. 6).

Elements of ‘past presencing’ (Macdonald, 2013, p. 16), the materialisation of the past in dedicated objects, are also presented in the magazine such as the two 10-metres crosses have been erected in the country, as markers of the Old Believers presence,

*onoarea primilor ruși staroveri care s-au stabilit aici dar și pentru a cinsti memoria tinerilor din Ghindărești, care și-au jertfit viețile în Primul și al Doilea Război Mondial.*

[in the memory of the first staroveri that settled on these lands but also to honour the memory of youngsters from Ghindărești that sacrificed their lives in the First and Second World War.] (Anonymous, 2010c, p. 14).

A second similar cross was erected in Climăuți, next to the border with Ukraine, close to *Belaya Krynitsa*, once a centre for Old Belief. Another example of ‘past presencing’ mentioned in the pages of the ethnic media is through monuments marking political as well as cultural links. In Tulcea, for instance, the different major ethnic groups in the city are represented through important writers, the Russian statue is that of Sergei Esenin:

*Toate acestea reprezintă o dovadă grăitoare a faptului că noi, rușii lipoveni, avem multe afinități prin care ne înrudim cu Serghei Esenin ca om și ca poet. Iată de ce ridicarea monumentului lui Serghei Esenin la Tulcea o consider drept simbol al legăturii naționale și spirituale a rușilor lipoveni din România cu patria lor istorică - Rusia.*

[All these are a telling proof that we, Lipovan Russians, have many affinities that relate us with Serghei Esenin as a poet and as a man. This is why erecting his monument in Tulcea I see as a symbol of the national and spiritual connection of Lipovan Russians from Romania with their historic homeland – Russia.] (Chirilă, 2011, p. 3).

The past serves as an important symbolic element through its elusiveness and a catalyst for discourses around a duty to preserve it: ‘it is the very imprecision of these references to the past – timelessness masquerading as history – which makes them so apt a device for symbolism’ (Cohen, 1985, p. 104). The symbol of the Schism, often referenced in heritage discourses will be touched upon in almost every chapter of this thesis.

### **5.2.5 Multiculturalism**

A discourse of tolerance, of multiculturalism is also often accommodated in articles in both mainstream and ethnic media. Most often, this reference is made to the Dobrudja area, for a long time portrayed as a multicultural area (Ascherson, 1995). In *Zorile* articles present the various events and activities organised by more than one minority and the governmental structure supporting them:

*În România se pune un accent deosebit pe multiculturalitate, recunoașcându-se pluralismul, varietatea și identitatea culturală a minorităților naționale. În acest sens a fost înființat și Departamentul pentru Relații Interetnice din cadrul Guvernului României. Sunt recunoscute și promovate valorile culturale ale etniilor, este în permanență cultivat dialogul intercultural, evenimentele organizate sub egida DRI bazându-se pe comunicare și colaborare între diverse culturi existente în România, creând, astfel, o societate interculturală.*



[In Romania multiculturalism is accentuated, the pluralism, variety and cultural identities of national minorities are recognised. In this respect, the Department for Interethnic Relations (DIR) was formed in the Romanian Government. The ethnic groups' cultural values are recognised and promoted, intercultural dialogue is continuously cultivated, the events organised by DIR are based on communication and collaboration among the different cultures that exist in Romania, creating, thus, an intercultural society.] (S.M., 2014, p. 37).

Such an event is the National Day of Minorities, celebrated starting with 1998, by governmental decree, yearly on December 18<sup>th</sup>, or the yearly festival ProEtnica which is considered as

*modelele perfecte de afirmare a identităților culturale și de conviețuire într-o mare familie interetnică.*

[one of the perfect models for the affirmation of cultural identities and cohabitation in a large interethnic family.] (Parfon, 2005, p. 18).

The successful integration of diversity is often stated as a fact, Romania is presented as a model of tolerance, and the examples of intolerance that are commonplace in Romania (Sasse, 2009), often manifested in negative attitudes towards Hungarians and Roma population discussed in the introductory chapter (chapter 1), are never mentioned: '*conviețuirea efectuându-se într-un mod exemplar și de admirat.*' [the cohabitation has been exemplary and admirable.] (Ciotic and Amelian, 2012, p. 17).

### **5.2.6 Tourism**

One of the themes best presented in mainstream media is that of tourism. The exotism of Old Believers makes them attractive during the summer season, when numerous news items cover touristic themes. Acknowledging that the tourists' view of a place is created at home (Salazar, 2009), often through the media, Dobrudja and the Danube Delta are the subject of numerous articles and news, as a '*un spațiu magic, nici apă nici pământ*' [a magical space, neither water nor land] (Pro TV, 2015a). In another reportage, a different private television journalist began his narrative with the following:

*Există un loc pe Pământ unde Dumnezeu s-a oprit și și-a așezat oglinda. Ca să poată privi în ea toată splendoarea creației. Norocul nostru e că locul ales pică înlăuntrul României și îl putem arăta lumii cu mândria că avem și noi fereastră cu vedere la Rai.*

[There is a place on earth when God stopped and placed his mirror. So that He can watch the beauty of creation in its entirety. Our luck is that this place is in Romania and we can proudly show the world that we also have a window with a view towards heaven.] (Antena 3, 2015).

Old Believers are perceived as part of this mythical land and stand apart from the rest of the ethnic groups present in the area, especially the majority population which is disregarded in such writings:

*Fără ei, magia Deltei este de neînchipuit, iar farmecul României ar rămâne ciobit. Lipovenii. Blajini și tăcuți, tăind apele ca niște voievozi cu lotca. Neclintiți în credință și misterioși.*

[Without them, the magic of the Delta is unimaginable, and Romania's charm remains a bit dented. Lipovans. Kind-hearted, quiet, cutting waters with the 'lotka' as princes. Unwavering in their faith and mysterious] (Iacob, 2011).

A special attention is dedicated to Jurilovca (the village discussed in chapter 8) since it is strategically situated next to the Delta and has managed to continuously generate media attention through a careful curation of the image projected:

*Jurilovca este poarta de intrare în Delta Dunării. Dacă până nu demult turiștii erau în trecere pe aici, în ultimii ani au descoperit un tărâm de poveste, oameni frumoși, gospodării primitoare, un loc încărcat de istorie.*

[Jurilovca is the gate to the Danube Delta. If not long ago tourists were only passing through, in the last years they have discovered a fairy tale land, with beautiful people, welcoming households, a place rich in history.] (Iancu, 2015b).

More recently, a tourism initiative that has gained significant media exposure, owing to the personal branding of its creator, Ivan Patzaichin, an international rowing champion and the most famous living Old Believer (discussed further in chapter 8.3):

*Pescarii din Delta Dunării propun un nou concept pentru a atrage turiștii: pescaturismul. Vizitatorii vor experimenta viața unui pescar într-o locuință tradițională.*

[Danube Delta fishermen propose a new concept to draw tourists: pescatourism.<sup>42</sup> The visitors will experience fisherman life in a traditional household.] (Digi TV, 2015).

The gastronomic potential of the area is also covered, Jurilovca is described as: ‘*un sătuc de lipoveni cu pescari oricând pregătiți să facă un borș de pește savuros.*’ [a Lipovan village, with fishermen always ready to prepare a tasty borscht.] (Pro TV, 2015b). Such descriptions rarely mention that only about half of the villagers are Lipovans.

The portrait of Old Believers created in mainstream media is often symplistic, which often includes images of bearded old men, blonde children with blue eyes, and women in coloured costumes. Women’s portraits are stereotypical and gendered such as this one:

*Grăsuță, cu pomeții roșii, tanti Maria este imaginea vie a rusoaicelor care, deși femei, duc pe umeri o povară de bărbat.*

[Plump, with red cheeks, auntie Maria is the living image of Russian women, who, although women, carry on their shoulders a man burden.] (Scînteianu, 2016).

Portraits of Old Believer men often play on the ethnic stereotype of the bearded man with blue eyes, a characteristic considered typical for the ethnic group:

*- Deda, idisu da! (Moșule, vino aici!), strigă Ecaterina rusește. În pragul casei apare un bătrânel cărunt, cu o barbă scurtă și albă. Se sprijină într-un baston și merge un pic șchiopătat. Vine până aproape de mine și mă cercetează cu ochii lui albaștri-albaștri, aproape orbiți de soarele mării.*

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<sup>42</sup> Closest translation would be “fishing tourism”.

[- Deda, idisu da! (Grandpa, come here) shouts Ecaterina in Russian. In the threshold, a grizzly old man appears, with a white short beard. He wears a cane and walks limping. He comes close to me and looks at me with his big blue eyes, almost blinded by the sun of the sea.] (Manole, 2015).

During celebrations, news reporting on the participation of Old Believers present them through stereotypical cultural elements:

*Costumele tradiționale, matrioșka și samovarul pentru ceai au fost puse, duminică, la loc de cinste de rușii lipovenii din Galați.*

[Traditional costumes, ‘matroshka’ and the ‘samovar’ were proudly displayed, Sunday, by the Lipovan Russians from Galați.] (Digi 24 Galați, 2015).

Moreover, they are represented in romantic terms, where the authenticity of a long gone way of life is preserved:

*Comunitate de ruși lipoveni, credincioși ortodocși de rit vechi, a căror autenticitate și putere de conservare o transformă într-un model de rezistență în vremuri atât de tulburi [...] se încăpățânează să își vorbească limba, să-și cânte cântecele, să-și păstreze intact portul traditional.*

[Community of Lipovan Russians, old rite orthodox believers, whose authenticity and preservation power transforms them into a model of endurance in such troubled times [...] they stubbornly speak their language, sing their songs, keep their traditional costumes untouched] (TVR 2, 2014).

In the ethnic media, the topic of tourism is relatively new, articles on this subject began in 2009 but has grown over time as a major theme. The articles that cover tourism, however, refer only to the Danube Delta communities. Similar to mainstream media, the Delta is a land of mystery ‘*Dobrogea - una dintre cele mai misterioase zone din România*’ [Dobrudja – one of the most mysterious areas from Romania] (Anonymous, 2012, p. 18).

The ethnic media refer to famous Old Believers (such as the one discussed in chapters 7 and 8) as well:

*Patzaichin a fost de acord să ‘vândă’ din secretele ascunse de Delta Dunării, un tărâm care ar putea atrage din ce în ce mai mulți turiști.*

[Patzaichin agreed to ‘sell’ some of the hidden secrets of the Danube Delta, a land that could attract more and more tourists.] (Anonymous, 2013, p. 13).

Villages are represented at events to promote tourism such as yearly National Authority for Tourism show, ‘Romania, the Garden of Europe. Discover the treasures of Romania’, or ‘Discover Dobrudja’ and their activities are reported in the magazine. Tourism is perceived as a solution for communities that cannot rely on fishing any longer. Old Believer’s traditions are emphasised:

*Majoritatea turiștilor apreciază tradițiile și obiceiurile locuitorilor din aceste zone, însoțite de spiritualitate și ospitalitate, precum și de felul în care aceștia își trăiesc viața în ritmul unui ceas rămas pe loc, cu mult timp în urmă...*

[Most tourists appreciate the traditions and customs of inhabitants from these area, accompanied by spirituality and hospitality, as well as the way they live their life in the rhythm of a clock stopped a long time ago...] (Bitan - Dunaev, 2009, p. 4).

Singing, costumes and food make up the traditional recipe for presenting Russianness in events in the country. As Old Believers are often presented as fishermen, fish is present in such events in different forms: ‘Doar înghețată de pește a lipsit’ [Only fish ice cream was missing] (Ivanov, 2011, p. 7). The fish borscht, with several festivals dedicated to it, is part of this as well (chapter 8.4). Other items that Old Believers display in events are linked with their Russian culinary products such as ‘vareniki’ (pastry), ‘blini’ (pancake), ‘pirashki’ (cake) or ‘pelmeni’ (cake). In the description of events that have taken place the references to Russianness are commonplace:

*Nu trebuie neglijat și faptul că au demonstrat, încă o dată, cât de pricepuți sunt în a pregăti bucatele tradiționale și cât de variată și gustoasă este gastronomia rusească.*

[We must not neglect the fact that they have proved again how skilled they are in preparing traditional food, how varied and tasty Russian gastronomy is.] (Samson, 2005, p. 10).

The choirs are presented as preservers of authentic folkloric songs, whose members express their love for the ethnic group through active participation in choir groups:

*Nu știu... e ceva ce se păstrează în sânge legat de tradiție, de obiceiuri, de puterea de a trece mai departe și de a transmite toate acestea generației următoare.*

[I do not know, there is something that is kept in the blood connected with traditions, customs, the power to move forward and transfer all these to the next generations.]

(Filip, 2012, p. 14).

The external and internal representations converge more easily when considering this topic, emphasising the uniqueness of Old Believers, as well as the preservation of their heritage. The objectives converge as well, the game of authenticity is played to attract the curious tourist with propositions for experiencing a past way of life.

#### **5.2.7 Preservation of Heritage and Tradition**

In mainstream media, the preservation of tradition is sometimes placed in parallel with the backwardness of the group, stemmed from a dualistic view of tradition and modernity:

*Veniți parcă din alte timpuri străvechi, au păstrat tradițiile.*

[As if coming from ancient times, they have kept traditions.] (Medgidia TV, 2016).

Sometimes mainstream media portrayals do accept change as well, outlining the same opposition mentioned above, that modernity brings loss of traditions:

*Cunoscuți după bărbile lor, pe care generațiile anterioare nu și le tăiau niciodată, lipovenii din ziua de azi sunt mai moderni.*

[Famous for their beards, which in the older generations were never cut, today's Lipovans are more modern.] (Scînteianu, 2016).

The idea of preservation of tradition appears not only in reference to tourism, but also crafts in interviews included in the dedicated radio shows:

*Păstrăm tradițiile foarte mult, la fel ca mine, mama a cusut pentru biserică, tradiție ținută din bătrâni.*

[We keep traditions very much, just like me my mother sewed for church, tradition kept from our forefathers.] (Șerban, 2014b).

The same discourse of loss, of changing times, is manifest in some of these interviews which deplore the diminishing numbers of Old Believers (Șerban, 2015).

In ethnic media, the situation of tradition, as well as that of identity seems to be presented in two opposite tendencies. The world of the village has been affected by social and economic challenges, as well as massive migration over the last 10 years, taking its toll on Old Believers' way of life as well,

*am ascultat cu durere cum localitățile devin mai mici, tradițiile tind să se piardă, dacă nu se iau măsuri*

[I listened with pain how localities become smaller, traditions tend to disappear if measures are not taken.] (R.Z., 2010, p. 4).

Hopeful ideas emerge however from some articles that outline, however, the counter argument of preservation:

*Privind înapoi către acele vremuri îndepărtate pot spune cu mândrie că bunicii noștri au reușit să păstreze cu sfințenie datinile străbunilor. În prezent, neluând în considerare cei peste 300 de ani de conviețuire pe plaiurile românești, noi, rușii lipoveni, sărbătorim, ca și altă dată, Crăciunul și Anul Nou după calendarul vechi Iulian.*

[Looking back to those far-gone times I can proudly say that our grandparents managed to preserve our ancestors' traditions with sanctity. Now, ignoring over 300 years of living on Romanian land, us, Lipovan Russians, celebrate as before Christmas and New Year following the old Julian calendar.] (Neumann, 2010, p. 15).

Reference is most often made to the stoic fight of ancestors, using this argument as motivator for preservation today:

*Noi, rușii lipoveni, am dovedit de sute de ani că am reușit în decursul istoriei să ne păstrăm identitatea, iar această luptă nu a încetat și trebuie să avem cu atât mai mult grijă astăzi să culegem roadele sădite de strămoșii noștri și să le fructificăm pentru generațiile următoare.*

[We, Lipovan Russians, proved that for hundreds of years we managed to keep our identity, and this fight has not stopped and we must take even more care today to reap the fruits planted by our ancestors and fructify them for next generations.] (Macsim, 2015).

Advocates of this view maintain the strong hold of traditions that have endured and can still be enjoyed today. In an article an Old Believer teacher emphatically extends this to all localities with Old Believers, although fieldwork seems to reflect a more uneven situation than such articles present:

*Prin urmare, vechile tradiții și obiceiuri rusești, învingând puterea vremii, sunt încă prezente în toate localitățile lipovenești. Ele se reflectă mai ales în calendarul sărbătorilor populare, în folclor, precum și în etnologie.*

[Consequently, the old Russian traditions and customs, overcoming the power of time, are still present in all Lipovan localities. They are reflected in the popular holidays' calendar, folklore as well as in ethnology.] (Chirilă, 2006, p. 13).

The preoccupation for the changes that villages and cities of Old Believers go through has become commonplace, as some localities have few children left (Anore, 2009a). For some, the freedom enjoyed in a democratic capitalist society is bound to have a negative effect on religion, the axis of Old Believer heritage and identity:

*Libertatea totală pe care o avem astăzi a diluat oarecum sentimentul religios al nostru, al lipovenilor, și a format în noi convingerea că prescripțiile pe care strămoșii le respectau cu atâta strictețe sunt relative? Sau este efectul pervers al propagandei ateiste din anii comunismului? Poate și una și alta.*



[Has the total freedom we have today somewhat diluted the religious feeling of Lipovans and formed the belief that the rules our ancestors strictly kept are relative? Or is it the perverse effect of atheist propaganda during communism? Maybe both.] (Varona, 2010, p. 2).

As mentioned above, this is especially pervasive in the case of the young generation, whose interests lie outside spirituality, aligned with Aidarov's (2006) remarks in the case of Estonian Old Believers:

*Am întâlnit tineri, cu amândoi părinții lipoveni, care nici nu mai știu să-și facă semnul crucii. Simt cum încet-încet credința noastră se stinge, dispare.*

[I have met young people, with both parents Lipovans, who did not know the sign of the cross. I feel that slowly-slowly our faith is fading, disappearing.] (Anore, 2010, p. 10).

An unbalanced representation of the state of preservation of Old Believers' heritage is presented thus in this segment, outlining the complexities of building multi-layered images that incorporate multiple points of view.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

As Nagel has aptly pointed, 'culture dictates the appropriate and inappropriate content of a particular ethnicity' (Nagel, 1994, p. 161) that can be recognised as authentic. As the themes described above suggest, the authentic Old Believer considers him/her – self Russian, speaks the language, shares the belief and appreciates displays of ethnicity through visual and auditory means. Yet, as there is variation within any ethnic groups, what is represented in the media results from a negotiation (Lazarte-Morales, 2008). Old Believers thus represent another case study where an ethnic community is either misrepresented or has limited impact in the general media environment (Zabaleta *et al.*, 2014). Overall, in the sources analysed here, the representation of Old Believers in mainstream media seems to be built through positive stereotyping, rather than the negative one that is sometimes referenced in ethnic media. However, the key word here is that of stereotype, and as the different themes considered here show, when present in the mainstream media, Old Believers are often reduced to their exoticism or misrepresented. Given that knowledge of

national minorities is scarce amongst the general population, such mishaps are not striking, yet they are potentially problematic as they feed the ill-informed general audience with superficial information.

Even though the presence of the minority in national media is dictated by the adherence to the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages its effects are limited, considering the above-mentioned limits on time and resources dedicated. Moreover, as the Charter is not extended to private channels as well, opportunities for expression are limited and only the most exotic is reported through these channels. Moreover, its declared mission to support language maintenance is limited, as outlined by monitoring reports as well (Centrul de Resurse pentru Diversitate Etnoculturală, 2009).

The ethnic media benefit from the Charter as their production and distribution is funded by the state, but their impact is limited due to circulation and agenda that is relevant to the ethnic community only. Moreover, as a contributor suggested in one of the anniversary editions of *Zorile*:

*‘Zorile’ trebuie să devină o publicație a tuturor rușilor lipoveni indiferent de apartenența lor la o confesiune religioasă sau alta.*

[‘Zorile’ must become a publication of all Lipovan Russians irrespective of their affiliation to one religious confession or another.] (Chirila, 2005, p. 2).

To reach this end, however, would mean that different ways of being Old Believers are accommodated in the magazine as well. In the period considered few articles referred to the priestless community of Old Believers, or to the Old Believers that considered Romanian as maternal language as reflected in the censuses. Furthermore, a spatial concentration on the communities in Dobrudja was observed, with communities from the Moldova area receiving less attention.

To sum up, this chapter presented an overview of the representations of Old Believers projected through media with a particular focus on themes relevant for their heritage discourses. The analysis took a dual view of issues addressed, discussing both the way that Old Believers narratives are constructed and the manner in which media created by the majority population reflects them. Situating their efforts for minority-language media in the international setting, the chapter discussed the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and the limited impact this has on the overall Romanian media. The

Old Believers' voice is projected mainly through ethnic media where they develop consistent analyses of their past and current situation. The veneration for the past and the manner in which it is mobilised for arguments raised to preserve traditions is especially poignant here. The discrepancies between general media and specialised ethnic media were also presented which are further on considered in relation to other chapters. Building on some of the ideas outlined in this section, the next chapter discusses the Old Believers' intangible heritage.

## **6. Intangible Cultural Heritage**

It was early morning when my husband and I got off the bus in the village, quite far from the workshop place. The morning's special light, noises from farm animals and birds in the trees, the fresh air made it a delight to walk towards the building where children would be taught iconography for two weeks. As we arrived at the building a young woman in traditional clothing, with a kerchief on her head was coming towards us. This was the teacher, the first woman iconographer in the community, coming back from the early morning service at the local church. The official opening was preceded, in Old Believer fashion, by a religious service to bless this endeavour and the children attending and a ritual meal. I was both witness and participant in this religious moment, with my husband commenting on certain aspects and translating when people spoke Russian, I pondered on the strength of Old Believers' religious heritage (chapter 4.4). In this short moment, some of the key elements discussed in this chapter were unfolding in front of me: the two languages, the religious and secular one and the ritual as communication of sacred symbols (Geertz, 2000[1973]-a). Centre stage was the craft of iconography, the efforts to pass on this tradition had brought us there. It is all these elements that are considered here, as essential elements of the Old Believer intangible heritage. The two notions presented of heritage as a 'meta-cultural' creation (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004) and as a tradition are both considered. The handing down of these practices is considered in conjunction with their transformation. In this light, wider considerations about the external influences and the social processes taking place in the community are also discussed.

### **6.1 Rituals – Living Heritage and Meta-Cultural Productions**

The rituals analysed here are considered on two levels, as social practices and as forms of cultural property. First, ritual is considered as an embedded naturalised practice, passed down through generations. It has a practical function, where sacred symbols are communicated and reality is transformed:

the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turn out to be the same world, producing thus that idiosyncratic transformation in one's sense of reality (Geertz, 2000[1973]-a, p. 113).

Geertz uses the notion of cultural performance to describe rituals, different from the type of performance discussed in chapter 8, due to its sacred nature. As cultural performances, they rely on embodied knowledge handed from generation to generation that outline their correct execution, and their transmission is ensured through repetition (Wulf, 2015).

In parallel, the heritagisation of these practices is considered as well. In this second understanding, rituals become a form of cultural property, used to make claims about the community. ‘Heritage rituals make culture visible’ (Brosius and Polit, 2011) and become ‘meta-cultural’ (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004). As Hafstein notes:

The conscious inheritor understands her practice differently than another who does not pause to consider, for example, how her needle sutures the past to the present and, eventually, to the future, nor how her craftsmanship transmits culture from one generation to the next (Hafstein, 2012, pp. 511-512).

This ‘conscious inheritor’ is reflected here in the works of the NGO that represents Old Believers and those of the academics concerned with saving traditions. An example for this is religious singing. This style of singing does not use conventional notes but a complicated system of ‘*kryuki*’ (hooks), to indicate changes in intonation. Considered as a traditional ritual within religious settings, this practice has gained a second life when it was moved from church to stage, and the NGO organises annually a festival of religious singing, under the form of a competition with prizes.

In the following sequence thus, I discuss three major life-events, christening, wedding and funeral as rituals, interpreted as *rites of passage* by Arnold van Gennep (1996[1909]) and Victor Turner (1967; 1969). As these researchers argued, these events mark changes in status through a series of ritual actions.

### **6.1.1 The Christening**

The first ritual to consider is the one a person undergoes after birth, ‘*khreshchenie*’, the christening following which the child becomes part of the congregation. Following the Old Believer tradition, this ritual takes place on the eighth day after a child is born. As Crasovschi (2005, p. 42) notes: ‘without it, salvation and membership of the Old Believer community could never be achieved’. The christening is thus essential for community

building and symbolically marks the entrance into the community of believers. The symbolic power of this ritual is evidenced also by the insistence in the cases of mixed marriages for the bride/groom of a different faith to undergo a christening ceremony before the actual wedding. Depending on the person's religion, the ritual is different. Old Believers consider the new-rite orthodox (such as Romanian orthodoxy) christening valid, but a short ceremony is performed to read to the believer the parts of the service that were removed at the time of the Schism. For other religions, which do not include christening ceremonies with full immersion, a point of contention for the validity of such practices, the entire ceremony needs to be performed. As the person is usually a fully-grown adult it is performed either in a big tub or even in the river, enhancing the symbolic power of the moment evoking of the baptism of Jesus.

The day chosen for the christening of a child is not random either, as it meant to mark the day when Jesus was circumcised. In practice, however, people do not hold this precise day and some extend the period to 14 days from birth. Similar to the neophytes in rituals analysed by Turner (1969), the unbaptised child is nameless before the event and will receive a name with the change of status.

The Old Believers consider the names carefully, as name choosing is a tradition in itself, with a rule to choose a saint that is named in the Julian calendar, within a period of two weeks from the moment of their birth. A connection between person and saint is created as naming is 'an associative act: it projects a hoped-for similarity as though it were a virtual sameness' (Herzfeld, 1982, p. 289). As some of the saint names are old-fashioned, Old Believers have indicated that nowadays they operate a dual system with a secular name for the child and a 'church' saint name, while in the older times they kept only one name for their religious and secular life. '*La botez primește copilul îngerul, nu are înger până atunci*' [At the christening the child receives his angel, he has no angel until then], said one of the informants as we were watching a recording of her nephew's ceremony during fieldwork. For this particular ceremony, adjustments needed to be made, as the parents lived in Spain and could only come home for the ceremony much later than two weeks. This change of the ritual, which was not obeying tradition, was perceived as a natural occurrence given the logistical challenges and adjustments brought by migration.

Similar to a customary ceremony, on the designated day, at the break of dawn (around 5-6 a.m.) the grandmother, parents and godparents went to church with the child. During a common ceremony, the mother is not allowed to attend the christening as her body is

considered still impure, the polluting body needs to be kept away (Turner, 1967) from the sacred space of the church. On this occasion, as the child was already four months old, the woman could attend the ceremony. The priest anointed the child, chrism was placed on his head, eyes, mouth, underarms, wrists and feet, three times each. As with other rituals, the symbolism of the figure three is central to orthodoxy, linked with the Holy Trinity. The main symbolic moment of the event followed, and the child was immersed in the font with holy water three times. As a new member of the church, at the end of the ceremony the infant was presented to the icons of the iconostasis. As in this case the baptised child was a boy, he was taken in the altar as well, but girls are not allowed to enter the sacred space (for a detailed analysis of gendered religious heritage practices see Clopot and Nic Craith, forthcoming). Following this, the priest cut a few locks of hair from behind the ears, the base of the neck and forehead, thus figuratively forming a cross, which were tossed in the christening font, symbolising the removal of the child's sins. The content of the font, informants explained, were then tossed in a special place outside the church, and his/her new life as a pure member of the church could begin.

A special role during the ritual is held by the godparents, who take turns holding the child. As informants explained later, for any christening the godparents must be Old Believers and cannot be married. A special bond is created which is even tighter than those between wedding godparents and the marrying couple. Such bonds are considered when checking that couples are not related and can get married, godparents' ties are considered just as important as family connections, such as first or second-degree cousins (Crasovschi, 2005). Following the ceremony, the child is usually dressed in a traditional dress, a '*rubashka*', with a '*poias*' (chapter 7) placed around his body for the first time, marking through costume as well his entrance in the community of believers. In the ceremony I observed it was the same, the child was dressed and a cross was placed around his neck, a blessed cross that he is meant to wear throughout his life.

The religious ceremony was followed by a modern party, which in the north part of the country is named '*cumetrie*', borrowing a Romanian name, a secular party that can last many hours, just like a wedding. As Plotnikova (2008) observed, this is a borrowed ritual, as the ceremony used to be more sober, and music playing during such celebrations was considered sinful. Both Plotnikova (2008) and Crasovschi (2005) note that another custom adopted from Romanians is that of '*tăierea moșului*' [cutting the forelock], a pagan ritual held on the child's one-year anniversary, when a lock is cut and a special bread roll is

broken. The child is presented with a series of items, such as pens, books, keys, money, and based on the item chosen predictions about the child's future are made. During my talks with informants I have not encountered this custom, however.

The flexibility of the setting for christening services was emphasised several times during fieldwork, and informants noted that during the socialist period, for instance, the priest went around in the village christening children in people's houses. An informant recollected that a priest once christened in a bucket. Moreover, if a child is in danger of dying and a priest cannot come in due time even the mother can perform a christening, but this is considered an extreme solution.

### **6.1.2 The Wedding**

As discussed in chapter 4.4, the Old Believers' religious calendar is significant for weddings as well; during fasting periods such services cannot be officiated (Crasovschi, 2005). It was in regard to this ceremony that discussions with Old Believers indicated significant change as traditions are not as well preserved as those observed by Razumovskaya (2008) in Canada. Older informants remembered a time when a wedding would last three days and would be preceded by a series of ritual actions. Plotnikova (2008) interpreted this simplification of the ceremony as a Romanian influence, but informants described this as a loss of tradition.

The first step of the ceremony was the engagement, '*svatavstvo*' (Crasovschi, 2005), when the bridegroom came to the girl's parents to ask them to bless their union. Following this event, the preparation for the wedding started. Over a couple of nights, girls would gather every night to embroider handkerchiefs for men, singing all the time during their meeting. Crasovschi (2005, p. 45) interprets this as 'a symbol of her separation from girlhood status'. This celebration of womanhood was called '*devishnik*'. Crasovschi (2005) notes that this ceremony is now only a memory, and while a documentary shown on television presented it as a living tradition, informants mostly mentioned that it is not preserved. One of the localities covered in this fieldwork has recently advertised on social media such a ceremony. A couple included such rituals in their ceremony, which were filmed and the



uploaded on social media with messages that emphasised a revitalisation of traditional practices.



**Figure 6.1 Old wedding costume in a display case placed in a local NGO branch**

In the old days, the wedding would have taken place in a tent, made with materials borrowed from neighbours, adorned with handmade carpets and paper decorations, the ritual thus becoming a community building practice that extended beyond the two families. The second day after the religious ceremony was one of celebration, akin to the ludic activities and the masquerade of the liminal rites charted by Turner (1969). This included pranks of all sorts and masked men disguised as women ran around the village, raided nearby houses for food, a practice which, as it was part of the liminal period, was accepted and was not perceived as theft. The third day was named the cooks' day, when the people who had supplied the food for the last two days got to celebrate. As the informant recounting this run of events mentioned: '*Erau alte vremuri, lumea era mai simplă, nu era așa sofisticată ca acum*' [There were different times, the world was simpler, not as sophisticated as it is now]. Another informant reflected that the three-day wedding would be extremely expensive today and to install a tent in the street one would need permits from the city hall.

The central day remained, however, the one when the couple was married. It was one of these ceremonies that I attended during one of the fieldtrips in the summer of 2014 as Old Believers across Romania finished St. Peter's fast. As guest and researcher at this event, I could not help noticing the themes of continuity and innovation streamlining through this celebration. A continuity marker of the ceremony was the fact that the service was held entirely in Slavonic. Following tradition, prior to the wedding the couple attended the morning Sunday service. Moreover, both they and their families had to fast the evening before and that morning (what orthodox people consider a 'black fast' – no food at all) in preparation for the ceremony.

A marker of innovation was the bride's attire, which did not conform to Old Believer's traditional costume which included a skirt and a long-sleeved coat (figure 6.1 on p. 144), in this case the bride wore a regular wedding dress and covered her arms with a silky tunic. As Fedot observed in an article, previous generations had used church costumes for weddings as well:

*Mai apoi s-au schimbat unele concepte, a apărut rochia albă de mireasă și pe la sate, au dispărut florile din ceară, ba chiar mireasa putea merge la biserică pentru cununia religioasă în rochia ei albă. [...] În ultimii ani, s-a revenit asupra acestei decizii și preoții nu mai acceptă să officieze cununia religioasă dacă fata este îmbrăcată în rochia de mireasă. Trebuie să poarte costumul tradițional.*

[Then some ideas were changed, the white wedding dress appeared in villages as well, the wax flowers disappeared, the bride could even go to the religious ceremony in her white dress. [...] In the last years, they have reconsidered this decision and priests do not accept to perform the religious ceremony if the bride is dressed in wedding dress. She must wear the traditional costume.] (Fedot, 2005b, p. 9).

The bride in this wedding thus had more leeway to dress in modern clothing and her only accessories were the cross that every Old Believer should wear, the traditional belt, named 'poias' and the 'lestovka', the rosary, described in detail in the next chapter. Before leaving the house, the mother expressed her doubts such innovation was acceptable but the bride jokingly resolved the situation saying that '*dacă zice ceva o să îi zic ca nu mi-am permis mai mult material*' [if [the priest] says something I'll tell him I couldn't afford more

material] (see figure 6.2). A further innovation noted by another guest was the fact that the priest did not come to collect the couple and lead them to church. As they were preparing to go to church the bride bowed in front of her parents and asked for their forgiveness, a long-standing tradition.



**Figure 6.2 Wedding ceremony**

Once arrived at the church, we were met by two women who placed artificial flowers on the invitees' chests, a custom similar to that of a Romanian wedding. As the wedding is an open event, anyone who wished to attend from the village was welcomed. Before the official ceremony, the priest stopped the couple and godparents on '*papertia*', the hallway of the church, for a preliminary blessing that relieved the couple from their previous sins. Later, an informant discussed the changing patterns of social life; as she explained in olden times brides were not stopped on '*papertia*'. Most of them were virgins before the wedding, and hence the blessing was not necessary, but nowadays the priest does not even ask and performs this absolution ceremony as most brides are not virgins any longer.



**Figure 6.3 Placing the 'sbornik' during a wedding ceremony**

The religious ceremony resembles the Romanian orthodox one. During the service the priest placed the two crowns on their heads, ceremony named '*venchanie*' by Crasovschi (2005), symbolic acts derived from the bible, pointing to the responsibility of the couple who is no longer in the parents' care. Later, the couple joked about the heavy crowns, which they deemed were made this way so that one would feel the burden of responsibility. During the ceremony, the couple held hands with the godparents, and their hands were tied with kerchiefs. Towards the end, the priest asked the couple to drink the ceremonial glass of wine and bread used in services to symbolise the body and blood of Christ. A difference from Romanian ceremonies was that following the sacrament the glass of wine was smashed. During the last part of the ritual, the couple together with the godparents holding hands were led by the priest in a ritual circling of the table that held the bible used for the ritual, a ceremony known as the '*Dance of Isaiah*'. The bride bowed in front of her husband, a symbol of submission, and while Crasovschi (2005) mentions that the groom should bow as well, in the wedding I observed it was only the bride who bowed her head three times.

A special moment during the religious ceremony, marking the liminal threshold, was when the bride's head was unveiled, her hair was braided and a '*kichka*' (a white bonnet, symbol



of a married woman) and '*sbornik*' (a second bonnet) was placed on her head followed by a white kerchief (for further details on this see Clopot, 2016b) (figure 6.3 on p. 147).

Following the ceremony, the priest led the wedding assembly to the groom's house, according to custom. The assembly was led by a child with an icon, the priest, followed by the couple and godparents, and then the remaining wedding guests (figure 6.4). At the house, the groom's parents were waiting with an icon, a bread and salt, and in a tent improvised in the front yard tables and chairs were set. An icon was placed in the tent, according to the custom, towards East. With their faces towards the icon the priest led a prayer, and then guests sat down to eat, a rather dionysiac feast with plenty of food and alcohol. They were seated following the old rules, with men and women at different tables. The talks were lively and towards the last part of the meal, the older, bearded men started singing religious hymns. After the lunch, once the priest rose, the wedding assembly rose as well and together they sang '*mnogaia leta*' (many years), a liturgical song for celebration.

In a traditional celebration, after the departure of the priest, the celebration would have continued in the same place. At the wedding I observed, however, the second part of the ceremony took place in the evening in the nearby city. For this secular celebration, the bride replaced the kerchief with a modern veil and prepared a bouquet of flowers to throw to unmarried girls, rituals borrowed from Romanian weddings.



**Figure 6.4** Wedding assembly leaving the church

### 6.1.3 *The Funeral*

In the summer of 2014 I was doing my fieldwork in the northern part of the country and during one of the visits in a small Old Believer village a burial took place. Just as I arrived in the village my host family was discussing a recent death in the community, an elderly woman who left behind her husband and a large family. According to the old established rules, the family would mourn for three days, while some men read aloud in Slavonic from the Psalter. Just as in the case of the previous rituals, the funeral brings the community together as '*un moment où convergent le social et le sacré*' [a moment when the social and sacred converge] (Naumescu, 2010, pp. 78, my translation).

My upbringing as an Orthodox and memories of long summers spent in a village during childhood informed my perspective throughout all the funerary rites. Using my experience as a barometer served both my informants and myself as a reference point, a common denominator which we could use to 'translate' their customs. At times, however, this meant that a line was drawn between the insiders, knowledgeable of such rules and behaviours, and the outsider who had to be walked through to behave appropriately. It was for this purpose that a young woman was appointed as my relentless companion, partly to guide me, partly to correct me when I would make mistakes, and maybe partly to control my movements in the field.

The first event that we attended was a '*vecernie*' (evening service), a religious service starting at 4 p.m. that lasted over three hours. These evening services, I would later find out, are not that popular, as men and women are out working the fields at that time of the day, so there were only three people there. During the service, on a table in the middle of the church there was a mug with a sort of porridge in it, with a lit candle stuck in the middle. This was our '*coliva*', locally known as '*cutea*', a boiled-wheat dish used in new rite funerary rituals also. The recipe, the women would later inform me is different, as only wheat, water and a little honey or sugar are used, whereas the Romanian version can include various spices, raisins and other decorative elements. The '*cutea*' was prepared for the day of the funeral to be taken to the cemetery in a bucket adorned with a kerchief and serves a ceremonial purpose, symbolising the body of the deceased.

The next day, we were supposed to go to the deceased woman's house at 7 a.m.. As we arrived there, women and men of different ages were already standing outside the gates waiting patiently, dressed in church clothes. A few elders with long grey beards and proper

*'rubashka'*, tied with a *'poias'*, were standing closer to the porch of the house, waiting for the people inside to come out of the house. Only members of the family and close friends along with the two priests who officiated the ceremony were inside the house. Outside, in the yard, the *'nasilchi'* (a wooden support for the coffin) was waiting, adorned with traditional rugs. Supported against the porch walls were 4 sets of icons set on long pillars (*'firuhi'*) (see figure 6.5), held by men, that and lead the cortege. While people debated the woman's life and her situation, what struck me most was the dignity and solemnity reigning over the entire event. No lamentation, the cries of professional mourners, which impressed me most during childhood, were not present here, making such a deeply emotional event more bearable. It also raised a question on different sensibilities and I wondered whether the kenoticism of Old Believers (Naumescu, 2010) had led to such a development.



**Figure 6.5** Funerary cortege going to the cemetery

When family members came out of the house, the warnings of my hosts in the night before, that people would be dressed in black, proved to be legitimate. *'Ne-am românizat'* [We have Romanised] she had told me, as this was a sign of change creeping in community life. There are no mourning clothes in the Old Believers' religious imaginary, especially not black ones, as Romanians would regularly use. A change in this religious rite was

emphasised by other informants as well. The woman's body was placed in a white cotton shroud. Some informants mentioned that in other parts of the country different coloured fabrics are also considered acceptable, such as purple or blue. A woman mentioned that in the old days they would use a large kerchief for this purpose.

The priests, preaching in Slavonic led the coffin with the old woman towards the '*nasilchi*', which was thereafter supported by 6 men on their shoulders. For their effort, they were rewarded with a kerchief and a piece of cloth for a new '*rubashka*'. Meanwhile, a movement of lighting candles started from inside the house towards the far end outside the house. These candles, lit for the dead, were kept all the way to the church. Following a set of readings from the two priests, the cortege led by a young boy with an icon and the four men with '*firuhi*' moved slowly towards the church, where we stopped on the steps of the church. Following this brief stop the whole ensemble entered the church, women in the back of the church, and men closer towards the altar, in established fashion.

The service lasted about 3 hours, during which symbolic actions such as untying and tying of the woman's legs and arms took place. A further striking difference was the presence of a paper with content in Slavonic, destined as a letter for the afterlife, which after being blessed, was placed in the woman's hand. During the service, I was amazed to discover that the alms have different meaning for Old Believers, I was startled by a woman handing me a 5 lei note that I was reluctant to accept, but people around me started explaining this was not something you could or should turn down. Keane noted that money offerings were linked with gifts for deities in the olden days, most customary coins, but coins have lost their value nowadays. Applying a semiotic analysis, Keane argued that the shift towards paper money was possible due to a process he calls 'bundling', which indicates that cumulative changes over time also trigger shifts in meanings (Keane, 2008) (discussed further in chapter 7 in reference to materiality).

Towards the end of the ceremony I observed every man and woman present in the church took turns kneeling in front of the coffin, a ceremonial farewell which involved making two waist-high bows and a '*poklon*' (bowing all the way down, with the head touching the small pillow, '*podrujnik*' set next to the coffin). Following this, the cortege led the deceased to the cemetery. On the way stops would be made at certain times, not at crossroads as I had known, but places where the deceased had family connections, another form of symbolic farewell. It was a hot day, more than 35 degrees, but people seemed not to mind this, as the cortege went on with people discussing about their lives, the woman's



life and family. At the cemetery, another short ceremony took place and the coffin lid was set, and was afterwards lowered opposite from the position I knew, feet near the cross rather than the head. Although this change might seem insignificant, in the Old Believer religious imaginary it makes all the difference and reflects their eschatological nature (Naumescu, 2013). Being laid this way, at the end of time, when the deceased will rise from the dead, they will rise and have their cross in front of them. The family said their last goodbyes and we all came back to the church for the ceremonial meal prepared by the family.



**Figure 6.6 Waiting for the memorial to start**

The memorial meal took place in a custom-built annex next to the church, it was here that tables were set on two sides (figure 6.6). Prior to sitting at the table, however, everyone stood facing the icon and a short blessing, led by the priests was loudly uttered. The same action was repeated at the end of the meal. Gender roles were clearly distinct in this highly-ritualised meal, as women were sitting on one side of the room and men on the other. Moreover, while female members of the family brought and took away plates, only men served alcohol. In such a close setting, my presence was most obvious at this point, but people closer to my end of the table accepted me, and explained what was happening and

how I should say grace each time a plate of the four-course meal was brought over or a plate was cleared, for the departed: '*Tarstva nebeznaia pakoinitu*' (no literal translation available, roughly translated as 'may she go to the kingdom of heaven'). It was late in the afternoon that people lined up for the finishing prayer and went towards their homes, making me reflect on the role of such occasions to strengthen group identity.

#### **6.1.4 The Ritual Calendar**

Apart from the rites of passage, the calendar year is also marked by cyclic rituals. The two main points are those of Easter and Christmas. Christmas is considered a family holiday, structured around attendance at church and sharing of family meals and visiting relatives. As with other things in orthodoxy, believers celebrated in threes, for both Christmas and Easter the first day as the main one, but people do not work on the subsequent two as well. The children play an important part in the celebration, as after the Christmas morning service, with the blessing of the priest, they go around the village/city to announce the birth of Christ with a carol. This unique carol, with many verses, '*Hristos rajdaetsa*', is derived from liturgical hymns, unlike new rite orthodoxy which has a rich repertoire of secular carols as well. As one of my informants noted, this was a tradition that had been revitalised recently. Within the general trend of reconsidering of gendered practices (Clopot and Nic Craith, forthcoming), another recent change is that now women as well as men can sing, whereas before 1989 only men went carolling. During fieldwork, more than 10 children with rosy cheeks visited my host to carol, crossed themselves in front of the icon and started singing. They had visited 18 houses before they reached ours, and had some more to see. In the city, unlike the village, as the pattern of life was different, children would not go from house to house, as they might not know which are the Old Believers' houses/flats, they needed to be asked to visit a house. In exchange for their singing, the hosts offered money, juice and cakes, whereas in the olden days children would have been satisfied with pretzels and fruits, now there was an expectation of money as well. Some informants remembered having received wine in their childhood from some houses, causing challenges by the end of the day. As with other rituals, mysticism is involved in the practice, carolling can only be performed in the house, as singing outside the house is considered to be done only by the devil to tempt those inside.

The traditional Christmas ritual does not include a Christmas tree or presents, yet some Old Believers now include these as well. Some Old Believers have also created a celebration similar to the one held by Romanians, centred around *Ded Maroz* (*Grandpa Frost*), the counterpart of Santa Claus in Slavic mythology. An ambiguity was evidenced in some discussions as families celebrated both the new rite Christmas as well as the Old Believers' one, some describing this as a concession for the children who would feel they had missed out otherwise. On most occasions the children were included in the Romanian celebrations held at school customary for the majority of primary and secondary schools.

Thereafter, the next major event is Easter, the focal point of the year in orthodoxy, a moment of great spiritual charge, marking the death and resurrection of Jesus. The intensity of the event is marked by its preparation as well, as the longest fasting period in the calendar year is dedicated to Easter, 40 days without meat and other animal products, at its most extreme excluding even oils. In preparation for the fasting period, that involves bodily and spiritual purity, some Old Believers ask forgiveness from those they have wronged in the past. Following the trying fast, the main event is the Old Believers' Easter celebration formed by a series of connected services, separated by just a couple of hours of sleep (Naumescu, 2013), from 10 p.m. to 9 a.m. in the morning, similar to those observed by Rogers (2004; 2009). Such was the Easter I joined an Old Believer family's celebration in the spring of 2014.

At the beginning of the service attended, candles were lit and kept lit for the whole evening but as an informant explained, re-emphasising the us-them difference (chapter 3.5): '*E diferit la noi* [It is different for us], my Old Believer host said '*Noi nu le luam acasă cum faceți voi*' [We don't take them home like you do]. She was referring to Romanian orthodoxy's custom to walk home with lit candles, a symbolic practice to spread the news about the resurrection. In a further discussion, the inadequacy of Romanian practices was mentioned again, as some men started joking during the candle lighting ceremony that the light came from Jerusalem<sup>43</sup>, whereas the Old Believer tenets emphasise the light sources are the icons in the church.

Around 12:00 a.m., similar to the Romanian orthodoxy the church is circled three times to mark the funeral of Jesus, thus, as in the case of the funeral described before, the procession

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<sup>43</sup> This comment referred to Romanian orthodoxy, as the Romanians send high rank representatives to Jerusalem each year to bring the holy light from the holy tomb of Jesus and then spread this throughout the country. In this instance, again, the errors of Romanian orthodoxy were emphasised.

was led by men holding '*firuhi*' pillars, then someone with the Gospel Book, the cross from the altar and two icons and last came the priest. This was done in reverse manner, following the sun, as Old Believer tradition requires.

After the end of the third round the procession stopped in front of the church men read and then everyone sang '*Hristos Voskrese*' (Christ has risen) and then entered the church where they sang '*Troparul*' (Troparion – dedicated hymn) and the Easter canon, followed by the Eucharist.



**Figure 6.7** Preparing '*pasca*' and eggs for blessing

At the end of the service, women started arranging the food to be blessed outside on mats and the blessing ceremony ensued (figure 6.7). On this occasion, '*pasca*', a three-layered ritual sweet bread and dyed eggs were blessed in the morning ceremony, which would be part of the first meal that breaks the fast. Following the blessing ceremony people took their food and left and as they were preparing to leave they kissed each other three times saying '*Hristos Voskrese*' (Christ has risen). The reply was '*Voistinu voskrese*' (He has risen, indeed). According to orthodox rituals, these phrases should replace the common greetings from Easter to Ascension.



In the afternoon, after the Easter meal was served we went to the cemetery where the priest blessed the dead and food offerings were left. This event looked like a celebration, people blending the spiritual with the social ritual. The community came together, and continuous conversations took place over drinks and cakes by the graves. Within a discussion during that event, an informant discussed the changes in experiencing such rituals today. She recounted how her mother used to prevent them from sleeping through the night as one



**Figure 6.8 Sale at the ‘*hram*’ for the Assumption of the Virgin Mary holiday**

needs to suffer as Jesus did; nowadays she could not bring herself to keep such rules for her young children, but as a concession she took their pillows away.

Aside from such seasonal rituals, another religious ritual is the ‘*hram*’, the day that the patron of the church is celebrated, an occasion on which the church is blessed again. A service similar to regular weekly services is followed by a memorial meal shared by all the participants. Some of these events, such as the Assumption of the Virgin Mary service I attended in August 2015, are focal points of the religious calendar. Such an event, attended by several-hundred people yearly, is similar to a pilgrimage (Ruggles and Silverman, 2009), with people travelling across the country to participate. Apart from expressing religious devotion, a ‘*hram*’ becomes a site of community-building. As a liminal period, this event

allows participation of people of other beliefs as well. Gender rules are temporarily suspended and women are allowed in the holy chamber of the altar. The event I witnessed on 28 August 2015 together with hundreds of people from different parts of the country, albeit religious in nature, had a commoditised component as well, as the road towards the monastery was layered with secular amusements one would find at a fun fair. Inside the garden of the monastery, however, cotton candy and amusements were not allowed, yet some industrious Old Believers were selling kerchiefs, '*poias*', and other religious paraphernalia (figure 6.8 on p. 156). Commenting on this mixing of secular and religious elements, an Old Believer woman considered it as a symbol of low – taste, and did not agree with the mixing of the two dimensions, while I pondered the way different groups capitalised on this occasion.

## **6.2 Iconography – Between Tradition and Heritage**

Eastern Christianity has expanded the diversity of forms of expression. While the West professed a religion of 'words', Orthodoxy widened its praxis by incorporating materiality. For the orthodox believer matter, which is in a constant flow of energy with divinity, can mediate communication (Hanganu, 2010). For instance, Kormina (2013) discusses the importance of canonised saints' remains and Hanganu notes that '*matter is a worthy complement of the spirit*', as showed by the incarnation of Christ (Hanganu, 2004). It could be argued that orthodoxy, through its use of icons mediates the tension between transcendence and immanence, as God that is not entirely present in this world nor totally disconnected (Lambek, 2013).

To analyse the role materiality plays in orthodoxy, scholars have turned to icons, which hold a privileged place in the believers' religious lives. Icons are not simple images; they are depictions of divine prototypes, the believers do not worship the image per se, *idolatreia*, but venerate icons as representations of the divinity, *eikonodulia* (Luehrmann, 2010). Confusing the object with the person has led to cataloguing icons as heresies, and during this iconoclastic period many icons were destroyed. The legitimacy of the icon was, however, confirmed within the seventh Oecumenical Council (Ouspensky and Lossky, 1952). The history of iconography is much older though, the first icons were traced to the time of Jesus (Ouspensky, 1992[1980]).

In their depiction of heavenly beings, icons represent them as ideals, not too old, nor too young, and the distinction between different saints is marked by small symbolic details

(Kormina, 2013). Icons are venerated in individual settings, in ritual processions or in pilgrimages and the bodily gestures involved in their veneration include crossing, bowing and kissing the object (Hanganu, 2010). As Hanganu notes:

Together, these icon-centered religious practices create a particularly sensory background, which adds to the conceptual and psychological layers of religiosity, and influences the devotees' relationship with the divine and, equally important, with their fellow humans and the surrounding material world (Hanganu, 2010, p. 46).

Icon veneration also sparks controversy as Luehrmann (2010) noted in the Marii El diocese in Russia, orthodox practices of icon veneration are sometimes seen as idolatry by local Protestant groups. Their argument is that Orthodox believers venerate the material object, rather than the prototype, and material objects cannot have divine grace.

Analysing the complex role icons play in Eastern Orthodoxy is thus important for understanding Eastern orthodox believers' ontology. Such research, however, goes beyond a semiotic analysis of its content. Hanganu (2004, 2010) proposes a conceptual framework for analysing religious objects by considering both their content and their materiality. In his presentation of a 'photo-cross', pilgrimage memorabilia in the form of a postcard, he traces both the narrative of its content and the social history of the object, emphasising the spiritual meanings attributed by believers to these copies (Hanganu, 2004).



**Figure 6.9 Iconostasis in an Old Believer church**

Pentcheva (2006) notes that Byzantine art is not solely designed for the viewing, but for a complex sensorial experience which includes vision, sound and smell, combined to create a experience that brings the person praying in connection with the saint. The trigger for vision is achieved by the use of a candle in front of the icon, which due to the breath of the person praying moves and generates different reflections on the icon, the smell is brought by the use of incense and the sounds of the prayer.

A further application of iconography, aside from producing icons, is the adornment of churches. Orthodox churches have painted walls and several rows of icons form the iconostasis (figure 6.9 on p. 158). The iconostasis marks the separation of the altar from the body of the church, as a sacred space which cannot be seen by believers, a liminal space linking earth and heaven (Kenna, 1985).

Iconography is considered in this chapter as a tradition following the definition proposed by Kockel (2007a; 2007b) as it has been passed down from generation to generation in the Lipovan community (Nic Craith, 2002). This entails a certain sustainability that feeds the pool of current cultural resources available (Kockel 2007b).

Moreover, iconography can be interpreted as an expression of ethnic identity, a symbol in itself (Cocq, 2014). Iconography is listed as one of the traditional occupations for Lipovans (Ipatiov, 2001; Moldovan, 2004). Treating icons as artefacts, from time to time, iconographers promote their works in exhibitions such as the one organised in 2014 by the Village Museum in Bucharest presenting works by a family of three generations of iconographers (Muzeul Național al Satului, 2014b) (chapter 7.5.1).

The larger field of Romanian Orthodox iconography (including paintings in churches with world heritage status) shows the change the craft has registered, which embraces a widening array of stylistic choices, with neo-Renaissance influences as well as different supports, such as glass or wood. The Old Belief iconography, however, is posited as more conservative in discourse, closely following the Byzantine style the first immigrants brought from Russia. The style these painters aspire to is marked by seminal Russian iconographers such as Theophanes the Greek, Andrey Rublev or Dionysius (Ryan-Smolín, 1993). Rublev is held in high regard in the Old Believers' iconographic world, so much so that one of the iconography workshops observed during fieldwork started with a roundtable discussing his life and work. Several iconographers I met during fieldwork claimed to be painting in the style of Rublev.



Yet, as Pentikäinen (1999, p. 19) observed, iconography was a field where ‘Old Believers proved to be great innovators despite all their efforts to keep to the ancient style of pre-Nikon school’, adopting new ways of representing saints. Based on self-teaching and informal transmission, the current style of Old Believers has Byzantine influences, but has moved on and one iconographer described it as a neo-Byzantine style specifically Russian:

*Prima dată a fost din stil bizantin grecesc după aceea câte puțin, câte încet s-a dat biserica spre icoana rusă. Deci sufletul rusesc apare pe icoanele rusești.*

[First there was the Byzantine Greek style and then, little by little the church moved towards the Russian icon. Thus, the Russian soul appears on Russian icons.].

Indeed, some of the icons seen in different Old Believers churches and dwellings showed a wider range of chromatic choices, from the bright colours to the use of black which is not recommended in icon painting. Thus, some iconographers, with formal education, make it their mission to redress the current situation and reclaim the Byzantine features:

*Încerc să reînvii situația, copiindu-se atâtea modele de la un iconar la altul s-au denaturat un pic și cromatica, și pozițiile, și compoziția*

[I am trying to revitalise the situation, copying so many models from one iconographer to the other led to chromatic, posture and compositional distortions].

Their efforts have limited success, however, as people are not as educated as the artists and they prefer more colourful icons.

### **6.2.1 Icons as Objects and Carriers of Message**

The icon’s name comes from Greek ‘*eikon*’, which would translate as image, and originally the sense of the term was wider, encompassing any representation of a divine being or an event but was gradually restricted and now only refers to the mobile object (Ouspensky and Lossky, 1952; Ouspensky, 1992[1980]). Icons are an essential part of orthodoxy, the visual counterparts of the written word. This is why the iconographer, following the Byzantine tradition, had a very privileged position. While the priest expressed the divine through

words, the iconographer was responsible for the image. The weight of this commitment was felt by some of the iconographers I have met during fieldwork:

*E un lucru așa important că ești răspunzător pentru ceilalți oameni și față de Dumnezeu trebuie să ai o conduită excelentă.*

[It is such an important thing, you are responsible for the other people, and towards God you need to have an excellent conduct.].

This includes both bodily and spiritual purity, as another iconographer contends:

*Un iconar trebuie să fie curat, cinstit și în gând și... bine, dacă respectă toate astea. Sunt iconari [care vor] nu numai să facă icoane ci să scoată bani. Alții care sunt mai conștienți, depinde ... de aia icoanele erau din astea dătătoare de minuni, care se făceau cu suflet curat și cu credința în Dumnezeu.*

[An iconographer needs to be clean, honest even in his thought and ... well, if he observes all these. There are iconographers who not only want to make icons but to get money. Others are more conscientious ... it depends, that is why there were miracle-making icons, they were made with a clear soul and belief in God.].

The icon represents a saint or an event, but shouldn't be confused with its real counterpart, named prototype in theology. As Ouspensky argues image 'belongs to the very nature of Christianity' (Ouspensky, 1992[1980], p. 41). A link is drawn between the icon and the Divine incarnation:

The doctrine relating to the image is not something separate, not an appendix, but follows naturally from the doctrine of salvation, of which it is an unalienable part (Ouspensky and Lossky, 1952, p. 28).

The incarnation is thus the main argument in favour of icons as it allows the divine to manifest in the material world. Here also lies the key for understanding the special role icons play as connectors between the material world – known – and the divine – unknown – but open to the believer by virtue of the image in front of him. The icon is essentially a medium which, through prayer, opens a special connection with the divine.

The icon is connected with the original, not on the strength of an identity between its own nature and his nature, but because it depicts his person and bears his name, which connects the icon with the person it represents and gives the possibility of communion with him and the possibility of knowing him (Ouspensky and Lossky, 1952, p. 32).

By virtue of their relationship with the prototype, these objects are charged with spiritual energy and open communication channels with the saint that is represented (Hanganu, 2004). As mediators, icons play a role in intermediating miracles also, as Hanganu (2010) has shown in his ethnographic account of a miracle-worker icon from a Romanian monastery, in Văratec (Neamț country, in the north-eastern part of the country). This privileged connection between image and prototype also allows messages to be transmitted. The special link between an icon and the prototype it represents was mentioned by informants as well:

*Icoana e mai mult decât o fereastră cum spunea Lossky, e chiar mai mult decât o poartă spre Dumnezeu, e singurul obiect 3D deși are 2 fețe, pentru că există lungimea, înălțimea icoanei, suprafața ei și există spațiul de întâlnire dintre om și icoană, a treia dimensiune. Și în momentul ăla e clar că există o altă persoană în fața ta și spațiul ăla de legătură unește cumva cerul cu pământul.*

[The icon is more than a window, as Lossky said, it is more than a gate towards God, it is the only 3D object although it has two faces, as there is the length, height, and surface and there is the meeting space between the person and the icon, the third dimension. And in that moment, it is clear there is another person in front of you and that this connecting space unites sky and earth.].

Icons are created following a canon, ‘*podlinnik*’, which explicitly conveys what rules a painting should follow to be recognised as an icon and includes details about stylistic choices and contents. As the border between liturgical art and heresy has been fiercely disputed, the canon plays a very important part in Byzantine iconography. Yet, as Rozanova (1988, p. 317) argues, the canon is not understood in the sense given today, as something ‘oppressive, dead, sclerotic, going against the creative process’ to be overcome

in the quest for creativity. It is essential for this art and it ensures that, despite subtle changes due to iconographer's artistry, the painting resembles its prototype (Rozanova 1988).

The importance of the canon was stressed by Ouspensky (1952) also, who argued that the canon ensures the iconographer does not deviate from the task and ends up creating an object of idolatry. While differences resulting from the skill of the iconographer are inherent and do not interfere with the effectiveness of the icon, inserting elements that are not allowed in the canon would hinder the icon's ability to connect with its prototype.

In what follows, several traits of Byzantine icons will be catalogued, following Ouspensky's (1952) discussion of the canon:

- Saints are always painted either facing the viewer or slightly turning their body sideways, never in profile, otherwise they might hinder the connection between believer and the prototype;
- Space is not represented as it is in real life, space is represented using inverse perspective;
- Saints are not represented exactly as they looked while human, their image should reflect the transfiguration by divine grace and that can be achieved by slimming figures; to symbolise their sanctity a halo is included.

Old Believer iconographers have had a tense relationship with the canon, as one iconographer explained, in their fear of change, they have petrified the canon:

*De fapt cred că asta e problema noastră că ne-a fost atât de frică să nu ieșim din canon neștiind ce înseamnă canonul... că nimeni nu a căutat să vadă ce înseamnă de fapt canonul sau au căutat, că cei care au pictat înainte erau staroverii, și că totul este bine și pot să continue pe linia asta și pot să copieze, să calchiese tot așa cap coadă și atunci nu și-au mai pus nicio problemă, dar canonul, de fapt, te obligă să scrii adevărul dogmatic, să nu depășești, să nu scrii cumva o erezie când pictezi. În rest compozițiile sunt libere poți să creezi, sau tot așa să te joci un pic cu culorile.*

[Actually, I think this is our problem, that we were afraid that we might exceed the canon without knowing what the canon means... and no one searched to see what canon actually means or they considered that as the painters before were starovery, everything must be fine, they can continue like this, to copy, to trace everything head to tail and they did not problematise that, actually, the canon forces you to write the dogmatic

truth, not to exceed, not to write a heresy when you paint. The rest of the composition is free, you can create, and you can play a little with colours.].

For one of the interviewed iconographers, the fixation on canon is linked to a larger picture that goes beyond the practice of iconography to the very basic fight for preserving faith:

*sunt tot așa, niște mici oprelisti așa, de exemplu Maica Domnului nu o să îi poți picta niciodată cu galben veșmântul sau tot așa încălțăminte ei trebuie să fie de purpură mereu... trebuie să fie roșii... și tot așa sunt foarte mici reguli, în rest libertatea asta face treburile mai proaspete și mai relaxate și noi ne-am constrâns atât de tare să nu ne pierdem și religia, și tradițiile și tot că am ajuns să fim ultra încrâncenați și nu e bine.*

[there are some small prohibitions, for instance with the Mother of God, you can never paint her clothing with yellow, and her shoes should always be red... there are other similar small rules, otherwise this freedom makes things fresh and more relaxed, but we have constrained ourselves so strongly not to lose religion, traditions and everything, that we ended up being hyper-apprehensive and it is not good.].

A further theme outlined in my analysis was connected to the different uses of icons. Iconographers emphasised different ideas:

*Da, nu e un talisman, că nu se pretează, e și o amintire a părinților să o ducă mai departe dar este și un sprijin. Cred că te ține conectat la tradiție și la rugăciune, atunci când ai icoana în casă involuntar, măcar o cruce îți faci, și tot îți amintești.*  
[Yes, it is not a talisman, it is not suitable [to define it so], it is a memory of the parents to carry on and a support. I believe it keeps you connected to tradition and prayer, when you have the icon in the house, involuntary at least you make a cross, and you remember.].

Icons can also serve specific purposes as well, and iconographers reflected on the help sought by the client during the painting process. Icon thus serve

*pentru diferite nevoi ale oamenilor, pentru boli, pentru neazuri, pentru fericirea în familie, pentru copil dacă vrea copilul. Numai pentru cel rău nu se poate face, adică să fac un rău cuiva, așa ceva nu există.*

[for different needs of people, for diseases, for troubles, for family happiness, for a child if the child wants [it]. Only for the mean you cannot make one, doing harm to someone, it does not exist.].

Age is also a significant factor, similar to other issues discussed here, youngsters are perceived as less spiritual, and the older generation is seen as preserver of some fundamental truths that have been acquired in ritual practice, simply by living.

*cei bătrani au într-adevăr o relație specială cu sfinții, atunci când vorbesc cu ei știu clar că îi protejează, că sunt în cameră. De fapt așa ar trebui să fie, e un lucru instinctiv, nu-i învață nimeni lucrul ăsta, dar nu știu, cred ca înțelepciunea... sau reminiscențe din trecut când oamenii erau mult mai liniștiți și aveau timp să se gândească și la suflet.*

[The elders have a special relationship with the saints indeed, when they talk to them they clearly know that they protect them, that they are in the room. Actually, this is how it should be, an instinct, nobody teaches them this, but I do not know, I believe wisdom...or reminiscences from the past when people were more peaceful and they had time to think about the soul.].

To ensure icons preserve their function, following their creation they are blessed by a priest. As one informant observed, the blessing is not necessary to authenticate its use, as once the figure of the saint has eyes it can be used in practice, but to erase the thoughts of the iconographer imprinted on the object during the ritual process.

### **6.2.2 Transformations of Iconography**

The process of creating an icon is a laborious task yet modern circumstances and the development of artistic shops in Romania, with their extensive offering of materials, can significantly simplify the process. The choice for traditional or modern ready-made

materials thus becomes a matter of taste and intellectual zest. The iconographers used modern painting materials, and as one explained:

*Toate produsele sunt chimice, nu se poate. [...] Acuma omul nu se mai omoară sa facă asemenea lucruri, de exemplu să strângă [materialele necesare pentru culori]. Rețetele alea s-au pierdut... de sute de ani se făceau rețete care s-au pierdut. De exemplu nu se poate face din ierburile astea, trebuie să le fierbi, să scoti [culoarea].*  
[All the products are chemical now, it cannot be otherwise. People do not bother with such things now, for instance to gather [materials needed for colours]. Those recipes are lost, for hundreds of years they have used recipes that are now lost. For instance, you cannot use this herbage, you must boil them to get [the colour out].]

The process begins with a consultation with the client on the prototype to represent, and some iconographers make suggestions based on the purpose of the icon. Following the decision on what icon to create, the iconographer starts the spiritual preparation. This preparation entails fasting, praying and reading about the saint's life to open the link with the prototype. This connection is evidenced by some with reference to periods when, under the influence of the saints, they lost track of the activity they were performing, regaining consciousness after the activity was close to finish. Discussing about painting a saint considered a tolerant person, an iconographer said:

*Foița se pune întotdeauna perfect, chipul se face singur și numai vorbind de el deja îi simt prezența.*

[The leaf always is set perfectly; the face is painted by itself and even speaking about him I already feel his presence].

The preparation process starts with a choice of a wooden slate which is treated with a special varnish that ensures the long-term preservation of paint. The traditional varnish is prepared manually with a boiled mixture of bone clay and chalk dust which was applied with a gauze fabric in several layers. For larger pieces of wood, to prevent its tendency to curve over time, strong feathers (i.e. swallow tail feathers) are set on the back. Modern options include applying commercial solutions to the wood or simply buying the wood plate ready for painting from specialised shops. While traditional choices include linden

and poplar, iconographers today use plywood surfaces as well. Denser wood structures such as fir, oak or beech are not recommended as they are too heavy or break easily and can damage the painting. The preference for plywood rather than wood was supported by some informants with arguments related to price and time. Plywood is cheaper and it can be used immediately, while wood requires a long processing time, over two years must pass before it is properly dry.



**Figure 6.10 Iconographer working in his studio**

The first step of the painting process involves making the outline of the drawing with a pencil followed by tracing the contour with a needle so guiding lines are visible once the first stratum of colour is applied. If the iconographer makes a life-sized model, there are several techniques that copy the model, whereas more talented iconographers rely on their drawing skills only.

A further essential preparation technique includes the application of gold '*leaf*', a very delicate procedure that requires precision (figure 6.10). At this stage, working in a sterile environment is essential as dust and impurities can produce uneven surfaces on the icons. Once, all golden leaf was genuine and art shops in Romania still sell genuine gold leaf but the iconographer also has a more affordable choice of gold-like leaf, dropping the price of



the icon. The colours are prepared next and the iconographer would have traditionally used natural colours. Today, however, these are bought as pigments, in solid state, and are prepared using egg yolk or ox gall. As with the other materials, modern art shops provide commercial solutions and some iconographers use acrylic colours instead. The last step of the icon painting process, after the painting has dried, is varnishing the icon with a lacquer, to ensure its colours are preserved over time.

As an icon painter remarked, in the olden days, knowledge about methods and techniques were acquired from other painters or any available books, iconographers were mostly self-taught as official schools did not exist. For some, the lack of formal training resulted in a certain hybridisation of the technique, with clumsy touches in paintings such as icons where saints had six fingers or awkward smiles.

Today, access to teaching materials such as *hermeneia* of Dionysius of Fournà or its Russian version *podlinniki* (Leonida, 2014) are more easily available. Dionysius of Fournà's manual, described by some as the iconographer's bible, can be consulted in Romanian as well (of Fournà, 2000). The iconographers that have been lucky enough to inherit this tradition in the family use the Slavonic source rather than Greek *hermeneia*.

Prices for original works are high, they can go from 50 to 500 pounds, depending on the iconographer's reputation and artistry, as well as the size of the icon. Those who do not have any old icons inherited and cannot afford to buy new ones resort to cheaper printed reproductions (Kenna, 1985; Herzfeld, 1990).

A concern with revival of this tradition led CRLR to develop a programme of workshops to teach younger Old Believers the secrets of the trade, such as the ones organised in Slava Rusă (Tulcea county) in July 2014 and Manolea (Suceava county) in August 2015. Each of these workshops was attended by 15-20 children every year. The two workshops I observed as helper to the organisers had a different approach. During two weeks of study, the children learned the process of making an icon, and at the end they had a final product. In the first year's workshop, the learning process was more based on copying techniques to help the children, some younger than 10, to get the right shapes. The second workshop, led by a woman iconographer, included a more diverse programme. Choosing a woman as a teacher marked a change in thinking, as for the first time, girls were allowed to participate as well. Some members of the community still adhere to the idea that iconographers can only be men, as women cannot become priests, they cannot practice this craft either (Anonymous, no date).



**Figure 6.11 Second iconography workshop**

Iconography lessons were alternated with drawing lessons, and the children were taught practical as well as theoretical issues about iconography, from the representation of face lines in Byzantine iconography, to the correct application of lights on faces and clothing (figure 6.11). The formal learning process was complemented with an evening programme of Russian films and animations. A local Old Believer academician came and presented the children with historic details about Old Believers' history and the local history, while another local person led an exploratory journey in the village to see the elements described by the teacher. Thus, the event became more than a simple iconography workshop, teaching the children about their roots. Explaining the reasoning behind such efforts, a NGO representative said:

*Ținta noastră este ca ei să îndrăgească aceste lucruri, să iubească, să le pese, ca dacă cumva se întâmplă ceva să vină în ajutor.*

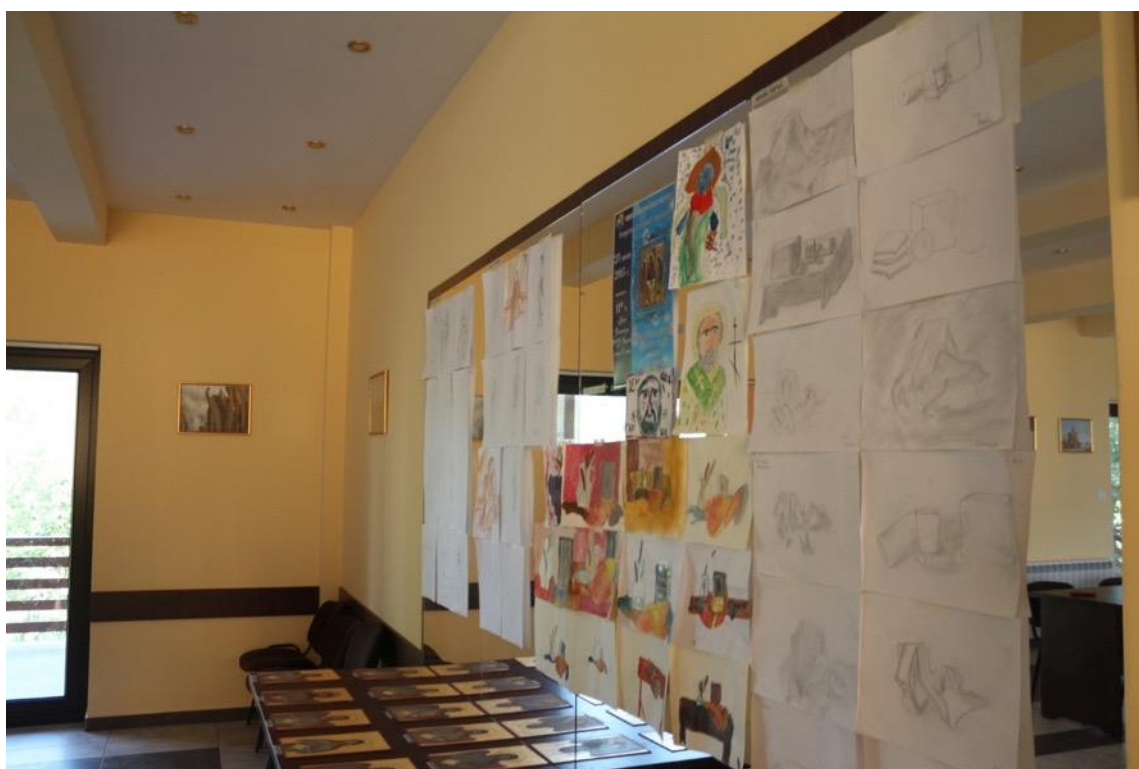
[Our target is that they would cherish these things, love them, that they would care for them, so that if anything were to happen they would help.].

As the children were quite young, in their formative years, the organisers hoped these experiences would be remembered later in life and lead them to become more attached to

traditions. The workshop was seen as a success by the teacher as well (figure 6.12), who commented in an article covering the event:

*Copiii au reușit să deprindă, deci, caracteristica cea mai de seamă a staroverilor, a creștinismului și implicit a iconarului: jertfa. Sacrificiul, dăruirea și răsplata sunt interdependente și se cheamă reciproc, horind de la o persoană la alta într-un ritm constant și neîntrerupt. Pentru a înțelege acestea, au fost necesare nu numai lecții de istorie a Bisericii, a artei bisericești și liturgică, ci și lucrarea răbdării, prin rugăciune împletită cu exerciții de desen și pictură.*

[The children managed to learn the outmost characteristic of starovery, of Christianity and implicitly, of the iconographer: the sacrifice. Sacrifice, dedication and reward are interdependent and they call on each other, dancing from person to person in a constant and continuous rhythm. To understand these not only lessons about the history of the Church, church and liturgical art were needed, but also the work of patience, through prayer blended with drawing and painting exercises.] (Editorial, 2015, p. 10).



**Figure 6.12 Second iconography workshop exhibition**

Formal education for iconography exists only for new rite orthodoxy, and some iconographers have taken advantage of this learning resource and supplemented their knowledge of Old Believers iconography in private. A formal system of qualifications exists for Romanian iconographers, recognised by the Ministry of Culture, but it takes many years for a painter to be validated. However, the Old Believers iconography is based on different systems, thus placed outside of this market system. The only validation that an iconographer gets is to gain the approval of the Bishop, a process which involves a formal evaluation process:

*La noi acuma nu se mai ține dar înainte așa era. Spre exemplu, [ucenicul] învăța cât învăța după aceea cu acordul mesterului la care a învățat [se inscrie]. Îi spune... ‘domne, poate el să facă sau nu? deja e bun pentru ....’ se admite, atuncea la sinodul care se organizează, la noi se zice sobor, care se întrunește la Mitropolie aduce lucrarea făcută și atunci analizează tot soborul și dă verdictul, el poate să lucreze sau nu... bine, cu acordul meșterului... meșterul deja dă în scris că a învățat... nu știu ce... e bun... respectos, mă rog, duce o viață curată, nu bea, nu manancă, nu se duce pe la femei, știu eu, mai multe... adică să fie om integru, cum se zice. Și atuncea primește aprobarea soborului și începe să lucreze.*

[For us, this is no longer held but it was so before. For instance [the apprentice] learns as much as he learns and then with his master’s agreement [he registers]. They say, ‘sir, can he make or not? Is he already good for...’ he is admitted, and then at the church synod, that meets at the Metropolitan, he brings the work created and the entire synod analyses and gives the verdict, he can work or not, with the master’s agreement ... the master gives written declaration that he has learned, that he is respectful, leads a clean life, he does not drink, eat [too much], does not go to women, and others ... to be an upright man, as they say. And then he receives the approval of the synod and begins to work.]

Indeed, some of the iconographers met during fieldwork did not have the approval of the Bishop but continued to work. Some of them wanted to obtain it while others did not consider it essential for their practice, as there was no indication it might increase or decrease sales. An iconographer recounted how, many years before, trying to get a Bishop’s approval led to a negative experience, he was held in a room to paint icons for

days with his work used for material gains by that person, which made him abandon his efforts.

As a speaker at the closing ceremony of the workshop mentioned, the talent for iconography is a gift from God. Other iconographers have mentioned in our discussion that the iconographic skills must be transmitted, that it is a sin not to pass this practice on. Yet, for some, apprenticeships sometimes turned into sour experiences, either for the master or the apprentice. As Michael Herzfeld (2004) described in the case of the apprenticeship system in Greece, the iconographic practice also reflects its competitive aspects sometimes and a number of masters refuse to show apprentices the secrets of the trade. As one iconographer put it, this is a skill that is 'stolen' not taught, a Romanian expression, which suggests the apprentice learns by witnessing rather than being given instructions.

Some iconographers consider their practice is just a hobby while others believe it can be the main means of existence:

*Da, dacă ești perseverent și consecvent și faci niște sacrificii este sustenabilă. Acum depinde și de cum te raportezi că dacă vrei să pictezi numai să te îmbogățești e foarte posibil să reușești dar nu știu cât este de bine sufletește să faci treaba asta. Și atunci prețul îl mai lași. Dacă omul își dorește foarte mult să aibă o icoană în casă și tu nu îi permiți bucuria asta pentru că nu are bani suficienți cred că nu are cum să te ierte Dumnezeu pentru chestia asta.*

[Yes, if you persevere and are consistent and you make sacrifices it is sustainable. Now it depends how you respond as if you want to paint only to get rich it is very likely you will succeed but I don't know how good it is for the soul to do this. And then you lower the price. If the man wants to have an icon in the house and you do not allow him this joy because he does not have enough money, I think God cannot forgive you for this.].

The question of economic gains was raised by others as well, but with different views on what sacrifices should be made:

*Adică în tot timpul cât fac nu mă gândesc la bani, adică nu știu... dacă mă gândesc la bani se strică lucrarea, nu pot să o fac. [...] Spre exemplu, chiar și scrie, nu te*

*gândi la bani că vede Tatăl tău ceresc de cele trebuincioase, știe ce îți trebuie. Dar prima dată caută dreptatea și adevărul și toate celelalte ți se vor împlini.*

[Well, all the time that I work I do not think about money, I don't know, if I think about money the work is ruined, I cannot do it. [...] For example, it is even written, do not think about money as your heavenly Father sees that you have what you need. First search for honesty and truth and all the rest will come true.].

Not all iconographers are quite as humble, some have made a fine living by working as apprentices for the 'right' people and as there are only a few Old Believers iconographers, some claim high prices. These can deter people from using the services of some iconographers and a priest confessed that he preferred to work with a Romanian iconographer even if he had to teach him Slavonic writing. For the iconographers that are lucky enough to get church painting commissions and not only icons, the process is quite lucrative, as the painting process can last as long as three years. The approval system for church paintings is more informal than in the case of Romanian orthodoxy. The formal requirements of writing a project and gaining approval from the Ministry of Culture are not valid for Old Believers churches. The project is discussed and agreed only with the local priest who oversees the project throughout.

### **6.3 Linguistic Heritage**

As discussed in chapter 2, language, with its intimate link to one's sense of self (Nic Craith, 2012b) is considered here as intangible heritage (Nic Craith, 2008). When Old Believers travelled to Romania they took their language with them, as language migrates alongside people (Nic Craith, 2012b). Or in the case of Old Believers, languages in the plural, as their linguistic heritage 'suitcase' includes both a dialect of Russian, as well as the scriptural Slavonic. According to one of my informants, since its creation by Cyril and Methodius, Slavonic has never been a living language, it was used in the administration and the church. The secular language spoken in Old Believers villages and cities is not the formal Russian language. As an informant noted this form, named '*grai lipovenesc*' (Lipovan speech) is a dialect that is locally specific: Old Russian words were combined with Ukrainian or Bulgarian words to form a distinct dialect and new words resulted from fusing Romanian and Russian and sometimes people even use Russian words inside Romanian phrases. For one of my informants, all these were signals of an irreversible process of assimilation taking

place in the community. From a more detached point of view, considering the discussed flexibility of the group (Prygarine, Bouvard and Coldefy-Faucart, 2004), it could be argued that this phenomenon was a somewhat natural reaction in a community living in another country for so long. Moreover, the limited linguistic resources from the 17<sup>th</sup> century would be ill-suited for expressing all issues arising in the communicative needs of speakers today. As discussed in chapter 1, Russian is listed as a minority language in the multicultural Romanian state and there are various structures that defend the linguistic rights of minorities in Romania. The protection of linguistic rights is covered in the Constitution, as well as in the National Educational Law:

*Persoanele aparținând minorităților naționale au dreptul să studieze și să se instruiască în limba maternă la toate nivelurile și formele de învățământ, precum și la tipurile de învățământ pentru care există o cerere suficientă, în condițiile legii.*  
[The persons that belong to national minorities have the right to study and train in their maternal language at all levels in education institutions, as well as [other] types of education where there is enough demand, according to the law.] (Parlamentul României, 2011, Art. 11).

The European Charter for Regional and Minority Language (examined in chapter 5 in reference to media) is relevant for the educational field as well, and the first report noting the progress on its implementation acknowledges the support from national minorities.

*Interesul minorităților din România pentru un sistem de educație eficient, pe care îl consideră principalul instrument de perpetuare a identității fiecărui grup, interesul pentru limba maternă ca vehicol al culturii proprii au făcut ca sprijinul pentru ratificare în rândul organizațiilor să fie consistent și unanim.*  
[The interest of minorities from Romania for an efficient educational system, which they consider the main tool for the perpetuation of each group's identity, the interest for a maternal language as a vehicle of their own culture, led to unanimous and consistent support for ratification amongst organisations.] (Council of Europe, 2010, p. 14).

According to the 2010 progress report, 59 institutions taught Russian as a maternal language, with a total of 3,486 pupils (2,112 pupils in grades I – IV and 1,374 in grades V – VIII (Council of Europe, 2010). Yet, as fieldwork has showed, the simple fact that maternal language education exists does not guarantee that children will have good linguistic skills. In some of the localities I visited apathetic teachers made progress in language acquisition difficult. Moreover, these classes are set outside of normal school hours, either in the evenings or weekends and are thus perceived as an extra burden. In an interview, a teacher described the schedule of classes as follows:

*Sunt despărțiți în două grupe. Pentru o grupă programul este vinerea de la 14 la 17 iar pentru grupa a doua este sâmbătă dimineață, de la orele 10 la orele 13. Acest lucru se petrece de cinci ani, este un efort și din partea mea și din partea copiilor și bineînțeles o sâmbătă și un weekend ratat dacă putem spune, dar ei frecventează cu regularitate aceste cursuri, sunt pasionați de limba rusă, de obiceiuri, de muzică, de tradiții, tot ce e rus [...]*

[They are divided in two groups. For the first group the schedule is Friday 14:00-17:00 and for the second group it is Saturday morning, from 10:00 to 13:00. This has been happening for five years now, and it is an exertion for the children and for me, and of course, a missed Saturday and weekend, but they come regularly to these classes, they are passionate about the Russian language, customs, music, traditions, everything Russian.] (Șerban, 2014a).

In other localities, the committed teachers guide students' learning and prepare them for events organised nationally, such as the Olympiads.<sup>44</sup> They also moderate local choir groups' activities. A local leader recounted the efforts to start language classes took four years in his locality, as there was a serious backlash against Russian.

However, in the villages and cities I have visited the discourse around loss of language was commonplace. Informants deplored the linguistic skills of the younger generations. They remembered how when they were young children they would acquire Romanian only much later in life, when they started formal education:

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<sup>44</sup> Olympiads are scholarly contests that are popular for different subjects in Romania, organised in stages, from local to national and international level.



*Aşa vorbea bunica, stăteam şi mă gândeam, ieri dimineaţă. Ea nu a fost la şcoală, ea nu ştia să citească şi să scrie în română, ea a vorbit ce a învăţat, dar ea nu ştia niciun cuvânt românesc.*

[This is how grandma spoke, I was thinking yesterday morning. She did not go to school, she did not know how to read or write in Romanian, she spoke what she learned, but she did not know a Romanian word.].

Another informant, in his 70s, recounted his experience with his mother, who had rarely left her village, how she asked in a restaurant for three pigs instead of servings and while the waiter refrained from saying anything, he started laughing.<sup>45</sup>

Language revitalisation is one of the core objectives of CRLR. To this end, the organisation supports ongoing training of teachers and the development of school materials (as discussed in chapter 5 also). Moreover, it organises annually the national Olympiad of the mother tongue, whose winners are then able to participate in the international language contest that takes place every three years in Russia, which is very attractive as scholarships in Russian universities are offered to winners. The children are also rewarded with trips in Russia over the summer, organised in partnership with Russian institutions.

Discussion of improving the language, by moving towards modern Russian, cleared from borrowings, is also present in the community, and an Old Believer said:

*Cred că este vremea să depăşim această barieră a unei limbi mai curate, mai înţelese.*

[I believe it is time to surpass this barrier of a clean, easily understandable language].

Yet, as one woman mentioned borrowings and mixed forms have been part of the language spoken since old times: ‘*Aşa vorbeau stră-stră-bunicii nostri.*’ [This is how our grand-grand-grandparents spoke]. Children, however, learn proper Russian grammar in schools and, in several instances, I have witnessed how a child corrected his father on a grammar issue, leading to an authoritarian reaction that this is how they were taught the language.

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<sup>45</sup> The confusion comes from the similarity of the two words: “*porci*” (pigs), “*porţii*” (servings).

Migration adds to this loss of language, with linguistic skills geared towards acquisition of the host language. Some Old Believer informants mentioned their disappointment that children of migrants more readily acquire the host language (e.g. Spanish or Italian) rather than Russian. As one elderly woman pointed out, this comes from a lack of engagement in the family, and many of the Old Believers consider that the efforts at school should be paired with efforts at home for optimal results:

*Aicea intră educația. Unde se face mai întâi educația? În familie. Familia nu vorbește pa livanschi, pa ruschi, dar au și o aversiune față de [limbă].*

[This is where education is at fault. Where does the first education take place? In the family. The family is not speaking Lipovan, Russian, they have an aversion towards it.].

Other informants expressed their lack of confidence in children's linguistic skills as well. '*Copiii nu mai vorbesc rusește în familie și simțul limbii se pierde*' [Children no longer speak in Russian with their families and the sense of language is lost] said a middle-aged Old Believer. His view was shared by others as well, and it was linked with a loss of tradition and nostalgia. A discourse of loss was commonplace in the communities visited, usually directed towards younger generations. A shift in language acquisition was mentioned for people younger than 30, people born around and after the end of communism. Russian, however, seemed to be the obvious reference when it came to choosing songs to represent the community in festivals across the country. It was then linked with expressions of identity, as heritage often is and will be further discussed in chapter 8.5.

In terms of the scriptural language, necessary for the practice of religion, the lack of administrative support and recognition at national level leads communities to rely on informal learning structures that function in some villages. Slavonic classes, focused on correct reading and pronunciation, are organised by priests, monks or elderly people, although mostly boys seem to benefit from these (Clopot and Nic Craith, forthcoming). Young children are taught Slavonic at an early age using old books, passed from generation to generation. Critiques of these efforts were voiced by some informants who mentioned that children are only taught how to read, they do not get to learn the meaning of the text.

This echoes Naumescu's (2011) arguments that Old Belief services rely on rendition rather than comprehension.

During every religious service, parts of the texts are read aloud by younger or older people, who stand in front of the congregation in a special section of the church. Naumescu, documenting the practices of Old Believers in a secluded village in the Danube Delta in Romania, noted that 'only the verbatim reproduction of the old texts and correct ritual practice could secure the referential link between material and immaterial worlds, and the efficacy and doctrinal coherence of Orthodoxy' (Naumescu, 2013, p. 105). Crummey (1993), on the other hand, argued that the verbatim reproduction served the practical role of spreading knowledge amongst illiterate Old Believers. The sustainability of this pool of linguistic skills is important:

The apparent immutability of liturgical form and language maintained through Old Believer textualism generates a sense of continuity, of an uninterrupted tradition of faith (Naumescu, 2013, p. 106).

Some informants recounted nostalgic memories of going a couple of villages for Slavonic classes at a local monastery. An informant remembered the Spartan schedule of a summer of Slavonic classes with his grandfather, a notable person in the village. These classes commenced at 6 a.m., included meal breaks, and finished late in the afternoon.

In my daily commute to the iconography workshop, a couple of children joined as they participated in the Slavonic classes organised in a small chamber in the local monastery by a village elder. Some of them were girls, even though on that side of the country women were not allowed to read in church alongside men. In a city in the northern part of the country, the priest realised that there are very few people left who know how to read and they are old; so he needed to start classes so he could hold services. Yet, in the urban, modernised city some lose interest, and a 50-year old woman indicated that only the priest knows what the books say.

#### **6.4 Changing Traditions**

The informants' view of tradition can be interpreted based on Noyes' typology as 'temporal ideology' (Noyes, 2009, p. 239). It accentuates continuity and poses tradition in opposition with modernity (Nic Craith, 2013b). This parallels the religious emphasis on the continuity

of belief. The same idea is illustrated, for instance in official publications such as in the brochure created for 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NGO:

*Stabilindu-se pe teritoriul României, rușii lipoveni au păstrat cu grijă comori neprețuite ale culturii naționale ruse, materiale și spirituale: manuscrise și tipărituri vechi, icoane străvechi în stil bizantin, mostre de țesături, artă aplicată, arhitectura locuințelor, portul popular, tradițiile și obiceiurile populare, folclorul ș.a. Toate acestea ne îndreptățesc să afirmăm cu tărie că, obiceiurile, tradițiile, precum și cultul religios al rușilor lipoveni, păstrate fără a fi alterate, reprezintă o rămășiță vie, deloc neglijabilă a culturii ruse vechi, a acelei culturi care s-a format în perioada de la întemeierea statului Kievean Rus (Киевская Русь), pe timpul Marelui cneaz Vladimir (sec. al X-lea) și până la epoca lui Petru cel Mare (sec. al 18-lea).*

[Settling on the territory of Romania, the Lipovan Russians carefully preserved priceless treasures of the national Russian culture, material and spiritual: old manuscripts and printings, ancient icons in Byzantine style, fabric samples, applied art, dwellings' architecture, costume, traditions and popular customs, folklore, etc. All these entitle us to strongly affirm that the customs, traditions as well as the religious belief of Lipovan Russians, preserved unaltered, represent a living remnant, not negligible, of the old Russian culture, the culture that was formed during the period from the creation of the Kievan Russ state (Киевская Русь), during the time of Prince Vladimir (10<sup>th</sup> century) until the era of Peter the Great (18<sup>th</sup> century).] (Chirilă, Feodor and Filat, 2015, p. 47).

This phrase exhibits the 'authorised heritage discourse' (Smith, 2006), the top-down approach that embodies the view of a static Old Believer heritage, unchanged by time and external influences. Moreover, it posits belonging to a Russian culture that has long disappeared as 'isolated traditions can be identified as relics or survivals signalling the distance of the present from a lost life-world' (Noyes, 2009, p. 240). The Old Believers are projected as sole protectors of this inheritance, based on 'understandings of history and ethnicity via memory and feelings of nostalgia' (Galaty, 2011, p. 121).

The Old Believers' case presents similarities to Cocq's (2014, p. 90) study of Sámi discourses online where defining traditions as unchanging 'contributes to the strengthening

of Sámi culture and identity'. Yet, the elements discussed above exhibit a more complex picture that incorporates change in different forms. As Naumescu (2016) has recently observed, the Soviet period, with its emphasis on secularism, included Old Believers but they were not central. During this period, the process of change had stagnated. Nowadays, however, the rhythm of life follows the pace of Romanian society, and the strong tendency towards secularism for younger generation is driven not by imposed laws, but by other processes. In this environment, Old Believers are as vulnerable to change as other groups, maybe even more so, given their emphasis on preserving things untouched. At times, external pressures, such as changing legislation forces variations in practices. One such example is the recent state law concerning funerals which mentions that the body must be taken to a funeral house within hours after death, thus menacing the traditional ritual which emphasises reading several days for the soul of the deceased. In addition, major social changes such as modernisation and migration leave their mark of these practices. Gender roles are redefined under such influences, such as the example of carolling or church reading (Clopot and Nic Craith, forthcoming).

Internal variation exists, not all members of the Lipovan community value age-old traditions. An informant perfectly summed up the ambiguity of current developments:

*cei care vor sa păstreze țin. Dar cei care nu vor... plus că în orice comunitate cel care ține la tradiții la ceea ce este, ține, la fel, dar.... nu toată [lumea]. Pentru că acum așa s-o ajuns timpurile.*

[The ones who want to preserve they do. Those who do not want to... also in any community, the person who has a regard for tradition, for who he is, he preserves, but not everybody. This is how times are now.].

The same ideas apply to the iconographic practice. Commenting on the future of iconography, as there are just a few painters still active in the community, an informant showed scepticism:

*Nu pot să prevăd încă viitorul comunității noastre, dar cred că întotdeauna va fi un iconar, cel puțin, adică Dumnezeu le rânduieste pe toate și nu scapa nimic de sub controlul lui și atâta timp cat este nevoie de o persoană ea o sa apară oricum.*

[I cannot foresee the future of our community yet, but I believe there will always be at least one iconographer, God arranges everything and nothing is out of His control and as long as a person is needed, that person will appear anyway.].

Further layers of innovation, as exemplified earlier, seem to echo what Crummey noted: ‘Old Belief was a complex combination of groups, institutions and tendencies that changed continually under a rubric of changelessness’ (Crummey, 1993, p. 711). The manner in which these ‘self-conscious traditionalists adjust to life as faithful Christians in a changing world’ (Crummey, 1993, p. 712) is likely to bring further alterations in the future and impact on their traditions.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This chapter, centred on the concept of tradition (as outlined in chapter 2.3) raised several questions in relation to religious heritage encompassed in living practices such as rituals and crafts within the community. Outlining both change and continuity, the chapter discussed the hybrid nature of current practices that has implications for the question of authenticity. The range of rituals considered (christening, wedding, and funeral) as well as the marks of the main religious celebrations all exhibit the fluctuation inherent in the process of transmission of tradition. As outlined in the conceptual framework, they are adapted to current conditions. However, this was contrasted here with some of the narratives projected in official publications that emphasise unchanged traditions. The binary view of change and continuity, discussed in chapter 2.5 as a false dichotomy, leads to misunderstandings and to an interpretation of change as loss of heritage. It also triggers nostalgia. As discussed in the conceptual framework, the distinction between tangible and intangible is marked here somewhat artificially to emphasise one side or the other. In the next chapter then the emphasis is shifted from the immaterial to the material, as similar patterns are found in the Old Believers’ approach to materiality.

## 7. Material Culture

It was 5 a.m. in the morning and there we were, three women getting ready to go to the morning Easter service after we had slept for only two hours. There was barely any natural light coming from outside and, tired from the first service, I barely noticed women of the family were dressed in a new set of clothes, but the older women suggested I changed as well. Not knowing the local rules, I had only brought one change of clothes with a skirt long enough for church. There I was, a woman myself, trying to conform to the rules yet failing from the start. The proper attire for such big celebrations is white or single-colour, rather than the multicolour dresses used for ordinary services. Even the priest has different costumes, with a better '*riza*' (outside robe) for more prestigious events, as opposed to regular Sunday services clothes. Although I had a kerchief of my own it was not considered beautiful enough for the occasion so I was offered an alternative that would fit better with my clothes. When my host saw me all ready to go, she admonished me 'you look like an Old lady'. There was a proper way, I would find out under her instructions, to set the kerchief so that it does not make more than two folds. It was striking to me that I was missing the feminine skills, not knowing how to appropriately 'do' gender (West and Zimmerman, 1987) in the Old Believers' way. Moreover, at that point I had little knowledge of their sense of style. Researchers have often signalled the link between clothing, ethnic identity and heritage. The Old Believers' spirituality guides their appreciation of fashion. Style, as Webb Keane argues, 'allows one to recognise, across indefinitely many further occasions, instances of "the same thing"' (Keane, 2005, p. 196). This chapter thus deals with tangible heritage, considering the items and that are necessary for the Lipovans' participation in religious life and secular tangible elements. The various elements mentioned in this chapter are at times objectified as representative of Old Believersness in museum representation.

The approach in to materiality is again binary. First, costumes and other material items are embedded in the life of the community as an integral part of social practices. In this sense, they can be encompassed under the concept of tradition rather than that of heritage. This social use is not unitary, however, and rightly so as heritage claims especially in a small community can include dissonance (Kuutma, 2009). The analysis developed here of the social use of 'things' draws partially from Webb Keane's development of Charles Pierce's semiotics (quoted in Keane, 2003). In his research of materiality of Protestantism as well as in separate more theoretical pieces, Keane outlines two of the qualities attributed by

Pierce to signs, respectively iconicity and indexicality. The first refers to an object's semblance to a sign, the latter to a causal relation. Keane proposes the term 'bundling' to describe the necessary interdependence of qualities (Keane, 2003). Two of his arguments are of particular relevance for my analysis here. First, it is the dependence of interpretation on the context, linked with the social imaginary, of what is deemed an appropriate feature for an object. Keane uses the idea of a 'semiotic ideology' which he describes as 'people's background assumptions about what signs are and how they function in the world' (Keane, 2005, p. 191).

Second, the openness of significations means that 'objects bring the potential for new realisations into new historical contexts' (Keane, 2005, p. 190). While this openness represents a threat to existing semiotic ideologies, Keane emphasises their relative stability. Moreover, he argues for a social analysis of objects, not only objects themselves:

We must be attentive to the ways in which they are (for the time being) regimented and brought into relation to other things – much of this being the task of social power (Keane, 2005, p. 193).

These 'active' objects are thus analysed based on these considerations. As I mentioned above, this chapter also presents a second interpretation. In this sense, I discuss here a passive use of 'things', as they stand to represent ethnic identity as tangible cultural heritage. Clothing items and other ethnic objects are presented as artefacts included in museums across Romania. These are just some of the examples of tangible heritage that stand as 'meta-cultural realities; in other words, they become official representations of current representations and practices' (Arantes, 2013, p. 40). These representations of Old Believer identity, disengaged from social life (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1995), will be discussed in the second part of this chapter (section 4-8).

## **7.1 The Religious Costume**

Clothing is not only linked with identity but also with naturalising gender, and the intimate ways in which Old Believers construct gender are more fluid today. As Lee Silva mentions: 'one of the most noted changes in OB communities, or at least that most readably recognisable to others, is the changing standards of dress for women' (Lee Silva, 2009, p. 45). Ipatiov (2001, p. 181) argued that the Old Believers costume represents 'the bridge



between mystical, secular and the past'. Costume, in this sense, is acknowledged here as a semiotic channel between the material and spiritual self (Clopot, 2016b). Costume serves to translate immaterial values into designs, grounded in the Old Believers religious imaginary. Clothing is linked with moral norms, as they 'reflect certain underlying assumptions about the world' (Keane, 2005, p. 4). The analysis Keane develops of how wearing different types of clothes reflects changes of identity is relevant for Old Believers. For instance, changes in the types of costumes worn are sometimes associated with innovations in rituals. Some are even seen as problematic to continuity as 'this cluster of habits, expectations, and constrained possibilities is the outcome of several operations of semiotic regimentation and stabilization' (Keane, 2005, p. 195).



**Figure 7.1 An Old Believer woman in traditional costume posing for me in the yard**

The main elements of an Old Believer woman's religious costume are a long-sleeved shirt and a long wide skirt, called '*lenta*', and a kerchief to cover the head (discussed in detail in Clopot, 2016b). Costumes usually feature bright colours and elaborate patterns for both shirts and kerchiefs. For men, the specific element is the '*rubashka*', the long-sleeved shirt with a low collar and pants. Typical winter clothing used to be a heavy woollen tunic called

'*kaftan*' (Morris, 1981), yet very few people still had this in the locations I visited. Whereas women should cover their head at all times, laymen's heads should never be covered in church. During fieldwork, I have noticed that some people do not wear these types of clothes, which need to be custom-made, but wear modern clothes that respect the length rules, pointing to some shifts in what is deemed appropriate attire in the Old Believers' semiotic ideology (Keane, 2003; 2005).

While skirts, shirts and trousers might not follow the old patterns, the presence of the handmade braid, the '*poias*', is more constant (see figure 7.1 on p. 184). Linked with the symbolic separation of good and bad within the body in the Old Believers imaginary, it is considered an essential marker of the Old Believer identity. The '*poias*' was the only clothing item that I, as I was not christened following the Old Belief tradition, was not allowed to wear. These braids are handmade by local craftsmen/craftswomen, usually with the help of an improvised loom. Colours vary upon personal preference, apart from weddings, when the '*poias*' needs to be white.

A noteworthy discovery during fieldwork was that clothes that would cover a dead person's body used to be hand-sewn, as they would get destroyed more easily. This was also the case with the '*lestovka*', they preferred natural materials that would disintegrate. While it is not the place here to start a discussion on the materiality of death, this example emphasises the consideration given not only to the objects themselves but also to their spiritual values, supporting the previous argument that the material and immaterial are not easily separated (chapter 2).

As Pentikainen (1999, p. 25) argued about Estonia's Old Believers, 'a costume is as sacred as one's soul, which cannot be sold or given to another person outside the family'. In this sense, the close link between person and his/her clothes was revealed by the ritual of burning a person's clothes after her/his death, a practice which seems to be less popular today as clothes are rather offered as alms to other persons.

An old rite strand of Old Believers, belonging to the Moscow line of Old Belief (discussed in chapter 1), insists to this day on using such a costume only for going to church. Delimitating the secular from the sacred, they consider it unbecoming to wear these designated items outside church. A person's purity of the soul should be mirrored in materiality also.

## 7.2 The Ethnic Secular Costume



**Figure 7.2 Old Believers singing group and individual singer in secular costumes**

The traditional secular costume of Old Believers included a long dress (Ipatiov, 2001) similar to the '*sarafan*' documented for Old Believers in Canada (White Johnson, 1982). The aesthetics is as bright today as it used to be: 'It is quite obvious the Old Believers enjoy the use of color—bright color' (Morris, 1981, p. 86).

With some variations across the country, this long dress was once commonplace but such costumes are rarely seen in Old Believers communities now. Yet, with the efforts for revitalising heritage following the post-communist period, these items have been revived as preferred costume choice for choirs or dancing groups across the country (figure 7.2). Putting forward claims to authenticity, such groups use these items as markers of Old Believer identities. Some emphasise the longevity of this attire, noting that fabrics are carefully chosen to be similar to those from the olden days. These costumes are thus commonly used in private celebrations, as well as during the festivals discussed in chapter 8. They are also used to project ethnic identity for choir groups when they are called to entertain tourists or to promote their ethnic heritage in minority groups' special events. Elaborate beaded head accessories, named '*kokoshnik*', are also sometimes used for such purposes, items that represent Rusianness (figure 7.2 – right image).

Considering these developments in the context of Keane's ideas (Keane, 2003; 2005), semiotic ideologies are contingent to their particular contexts and as circumstances shift existing repertoires of usage can change due to the openness of significations. The problems appear, in my view, when the balance swings from original social use and

centuries-old semiotic ideologies in favour of meta-cultural productions and staging of heritage.

Discussing with a woman Old Believer about traditional clothing during a secular celebration, she pondered how such costumes can be perceived as out of place in the cosmopolitan city:

*Îți poți imagina, noi mergând prin oraș cu baticul pe cap, cu fustele noastre scurte. Nu știam pe ce străzi să mă ascund când mergeam la biserică orașul natal, darămite aici.*

[Do you imagine us going around in the city with our kerchief on our heads, with our long skirts? I did not know what streets to go on to hide when going to church in my hometown, let alone here.].

In such urban places the kerchief is more fashionably worn as a scarf rather than on the head, or as indeed seen in this event, converted into a modern skirt. Moreover, aspects of commodification were observed in different areas, whereby popular patterns were increasingly replicated. An informal economy has developed in different parts of the country, with different seamstresses producing Old Believer costumes, as well as ‘*rubashkas*’ and other traditional clothing items.

### **7.3 Religious Objects**

Apart from dedicated religious sites and specialised dress, other material items are needed as well for the practice of Old Belief, such as sacred books, crosses and ritual objects. Naumescu highlighted the importance of materiality for the practice of Old Belief:

Religious materialities such as Old Believers’ books and icons provide cognitive support for the imagination, triggering particular associations between visible and invisible, presence and absence, and making people’s relationship with the divine immanent and intimate (Naumescu, 2011, p. 65).





**Figure 7.3 Handwritten book from an Old Believer's family archive (photo by Pavel Lupu, with permission)**

These books, often written by hand, were invested with symbolic functions for preserving the Old Belief at a time when they did not have access to official printing (figure 7.3). Rogers emphasised this as well:

Not only were these texts repositories of authoritative moral guidelines to be consulted, and cited in all aspects of life, but they were also highly valued objects, material tracers of moral communities across space and time (Rogers, 2009, p. 159).

Douglas traced the efforts of archaeographers in mapping such texts in the Upper Kama region in Russia and argued that in the meantime they had built a ‘textual community’ (Rogers, 2009, p. 168) in its own right. In the villages of Romania, however, there is no sign of intrusion or support of outsiders. Families pass books from generation to generation and it is not uncommon for Old Believers to store centuries-old books within their houses (Fenoghen 2009). Naumescu places books centre-stage in the practice of Old Belief and he describes this as a move towards ‘textualism’ defined as ‘passive literacy with an

emphasis on precise repetition and correct reading instead of sustained exegetical exercise’ (Naumescu, 2011, p. 61). The Old Believers communities’ inheritance includes books such as ‘the Church Slavonic primer (*Azbuka*)’ (Morris, 1981, p. 199) and other religious texts. On several occasions, I have been allowed to marvel at books which were 200 to 300 years old, and one monk claimed to own a book from the 1600s. These are not usually kept under controlled conditions and although they are in danger of deteriorating faster, informants did not dare to part with them. A monastery in the northern part of the country, in Manolea, had a printing house which produced many such books, but during communism it was closed (chapter 4.1) and later burned down. In this location, while a large part of the initial library was destroyed in a devastating fire, a run-down treasure trove library with remaining books is gathering dust. Centuries-old books were sitting on its shelf in 40 degrees’ weather as in the summer when I visited. A talk of the need to preserve this library took place then and of the support monks needed to make this room appropriate for storage. With printing houses commonplace now and with connections with Russia so readily available, the usefulness of the handwritten book seems to be derived from its heritage value rather than its content. As an object of heritage, such material inheritance is extremely precious, yet none of the exhibitions observed (sections 7.4-7.7) included such items.



**Figure 7.4 ‘*Lestovka*’, ‘*poias*’ and ‘*podrujnik*’**

A further element with powerful symbolic properties that Old Believers use is a ‘*lestovka*’, the rosary (figure 7.4 – left image). Every element of this object, from the larger triangles to the small beads is a signifier for a religious event or person. The rosary chain, for instance, has some protuberances from place to place which mark a period in the life of Jesus, the time he was in Holy Mother’s womb, the number of years spent on Earth (33) and the last 17 stand for the seventeen prophets that announced his coming. The two

triangles are also signifiers of the holy trinity. There are two varieties of '*lestovka*' currently available, one made from artificial crocheted beads and another made of genuine or faux leather.

The craftswomen met during fieldwork emphasised the link with spirituality in the fabrication of both the '*poias*' (figure 7.4 on p. 189 – middle image) and the '*lestovka*'. During the production of these objects the craftswoman/man is supposed to continuously pray. At times prayer, my informant noted, makes it seem less of an arduous task. The diminishing numbers of artisans in Old Believers communities leads to difficulties in procuring such religious objects and people sometimes order them from hundreds of kilometres away.

One last item to consider that is associated with religion is '*podrujnik*' (figure 7.4 on p. 189 – right image), a small square pillow designed 'to protect the right hand from touching the floor during bows' (Morris, 1981, p. 72). According to one of my informants, the number of triangles was relevant, part of a sacred geometry, alike that of the '*lestovka*'. The 4 squares of the pillow represent the Evangelists, the middle square God and the number of different triangles (12) the apostles. Yet, very few people were still able to recount the meaning of these elements during fieldwork and while these used to be custom-made with traditional designs (quilted pillows) they are sometimes changed with modern versions (i.e. a child's pillow with a popular cartoon design). While serving the same ritual function, a question is raised whether these new designs are alterations of traditional objects, or point to a shift in 'semiotic ideology.'

In what follows, the second part of this chapter considers the passive use of objects, as signifiers of Old Believers in museums.

## **7.4 Museum Representations**

It was late in July 2015 when, defying the hot temperatures of summer, people had gathered inside the NGO headquarters in the Northern village of Romania to hear a series of talks on iconography and the iconographer Andrey Rublev in particular. This was the beginning of the yearly iconography workshop (described in chapter 6) that occasioned this event and as they often do, several Old Believers seized the opportunity to discuss the future of the community with the NGO representatives. Following a series of academic talks, people started discussing the protection of valuable old icons, which are regularly lost either by being buried with the owners, destroyed in fires or stolen. An idea of an inventory of such

valuable objects was mentioned by one of the participants and this led to a discussion of museums. A local Old Believer explained that there used to exist a tradition of growing hemp in the area and he recounted how his father had a rich vocabulary with dozens of Russian words associated with tools and objects that have disappeared as no one was interested in recording these. People in the audience seemed to echo his thoughts and a discussion of a possible museum of Old Believers ensued. The NGO representatives expressed their interest in a museum, and mentioned a possible collaboration with a Russian museum from Vetka (centre for Old Believers mentioned in chapter 4) in their projections. It was felt, though, as one participant explained that there should be two museums, as the Old Believers from Moldavia are different:

*Noi nu avem, în privința tradițiilor lipovenești, prea multe în comun cu cei din Dobrogea.*

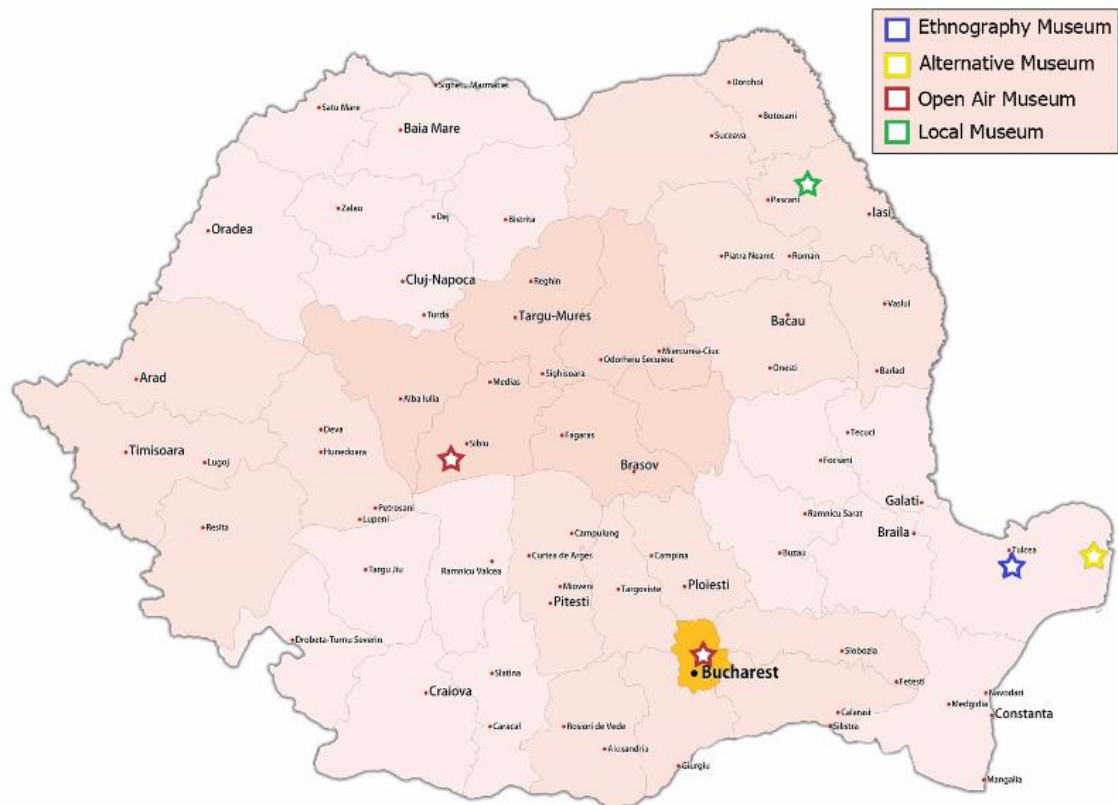
[In our Lipovan traditions, we do not have too much in common with those from Dobrudja.].

He went on to explain that occupations as well as military techniques were different in this side of the country, given the different roots of the two groups (discussed in chapter 1.1). The debate was not settled, as expected, and ended with an acknowledgement of the riches of the Old Believer culture that should be represented in a museum, albeit the necessary conditions for creating one were not met at that time.

This brief vignette outlines some of the themes discussed in the remaining sections of this chapter, from the perception of museums as saviours of culture, to the unequal representation of the Old Believers from different areas. If in the previous section material culture embedded in social processes was considered, this segment reflects on heritage objects which, removed from their original setting, gain a new trajectory (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1995) as exhibits. There are two main types of museums considered here, official open-air and ethnographic museums (marked in figure 7.5 on p. 192). Subsequently, some unofficial initiatives are considered in the form of local museums before closing on



alternative forms of exhibition created in response to a lack of a formal space curated by members of the community.



**Figure 7.5 Romanian map with marks for museums discussed in this chapter (image by Pavel Lupu, with permission)**

#### **7.4.1 Curation and Display Strategies**

As Sharon Macdonald (2013, p. 147) writes objects that are included in exhibitions had once been ordinarily used in everyday life and ‘paradoxically perhaps, it is their very “ordinariness” that allows them to be special in this specific context’. Museum studies specialists agree that once taken out of use, the object included in an exhibition becomes mouldable into different settings and new interpretations as ‘museums *recontextualize* objects’ (Macdonald, 2006, p. 82, original emphasis). Museum curators hold power over ascribing meanings (Karp and Kratz, 2014). This strength does not exist in a vacuum and, as Karp and Kratz (2000, p. 202) observe:

Every exhibition context and display technique embodies particular claims to authority, though all draw on culturally shared evaluations and assumptions about truth, reality, representation, and differences among cultures.

And this power, which Karp and Kratz (2000, p. 205) categorise as either ‘ethnographic authority’ or ‘cultural authority’ is exercised in different ways. Under the former the authors include issues such as label texts, decisions on what objects to include or how they are arranged. Under the latter, the authors describe the authority exercised by the museum as an institution, evidenced in things such as brochures or presentation materials. Both types of authorities will be discussed here, as fieldwork data will be combined with documentary data to highlight the two types.

There are different types of displays considered in this chapter as well as several types of museums. One such type is the diorama, a display technique which includes items set not in display cases but assembled in a scene, carefully conceived to reflect the reality it evokes. Whether it represents a room in a house, or an animal in its environment, it aims to be a representation as truthful as a picture. Holding claims to naturalness and authenticity, the diorama ‘presents an ideal picture of perfect specimens, uncontaminated by historical and situational considerations’ (Karp and Kratz, 2000, p. 215). Display cases, on the other hand, are linked with artificiality (Lidchi, 1997), placing items under a glass enhances the distance between viewer and object, resulting in the opposite effect.

One of the types of museum discussed below is that of open-air museums. Linked with the nationalist movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Johler, 2015), these older museums once were a common sight in Europe and many still exist today, such as the Nordiska Museet (Sweden) or the Open-Air Museum part of the Danish National Museum. They are an example of what Kirschenblatt-Gimblet describes as *in situ*:

The notion of *in situ* entails metonymy and mimesis, the object is a part that stands in a contiguous relation to an absent whole that may or may not be recreated (Kirschenblatt-Gimblet, 1998, p. 19).

At the other end, we have *in-context* exhibitions, those that we most regularly see today, where objects’ curation strategies are more extensive:

In-context approaches to installation establish a theoretical frame of reference for the viewer, offer explanations, provide historical background, make comparisons, pose questions, and sometimes even extend to the circumstances of excavation, collection, and conservation of the objects on display. There are as many contexts for an object as there interpretive strategies (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, p. 21).



**Figure 7.6 Diorama display in the Danube Delta Eco-Tourism Museum Centre**

The in-context approach is considered here through the analysis of representations in ethnographic museums (figure 7.6) such as the Pitt Rivers Museum in the UK. Ethnographic museums are compared by some academics with ethnographic writing, with the charge that this is ‘a very public form of ethnography’ (Riegel, 1995, p. 89). Moreover, their representation of the ‘Other’ is guided either by exoticism or by assimilation (Nederveen Pieterse, 1997b). While the former accentuates differences, the latter plays on the similarities between groups.

One last type of displays considered here is that of alternative museums, those forms of exhibition that are not created by specialists, but function along the same lines of a regular museum (Kreps, 2006). Kreps discusses such examples of community museums in non-western settings and concludes that while collection and exhibiting techniques are similar,

access might sometimes be restricted and judged in terms of the cultural and social rules of the group. The objects are thus not necessarily removed from their settings: ‘What becomes clear in looking at how objects are perceived and treated in indigenous contexts is that they are embedded in a larger socio-cultural context, in direct relationship to people’s lives, and are part of continuing cultural traditions’ (Kreps, 2006, p. 466).

#### **7.4.2 *Multiple Identities in Museums***

Since their emergence in the form that we are now accustomed to, museums, with their power to objectify culture, have been arenas of identity-work at national level, serving to create or reinforce a sense of national identity (Macdonald, 2012). Due to their powerful evocative powers, museums had been appropriated by the state and to this day museums have a difficult relationship with representing diversity (Macdonald, 2016). Experiencing the past through a visit at the museum was not very taxing for the visitor, as ‘traditional life could be both viewed and entered but also exited, and left behind’ (Macdonald, 2013, p. 142). The bones of this nationalist representation were based on the majority group’s view, for a majority audience. As Handler writes ‘the display of ethnic culture in museums reproduces an ideology of culture that homogenizes or domesticates, rather than enhances, cultural diversity’ (Handler, 1989, p. 19). The ‘decisions about how cultures are presented reflect deeper judgements of power and authority’ (Lavine and Karp, 1991, p. 3) within the country. When integrating difference, museums often fall within two types of logic of display, one that emphasises either difference or assimilation (Lavine and Karp, 1991), in both instances Nederveen Pieterse (1997a) observes, it is a discourse of the ‘Other’ that is created. Although Romania does not have one official national museum, the existing museums of different types are part of the official representation of a national story. As I show here, however, recently exhibitions have also emphasised multiculturalism.

The first Romanian museum collections appeared at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in a period when intellectuals were preoccupied with national identity. Two of the museums discussed here, the Village Museum (Bucharest) and ASTRA Museum (Sibiu), are some of the oldest collections, dating from 1920s-1930s. Their creation, connected to influential Romanian sociologists, such as Dimitrie Gusti, Henry Stahl, or Petre Andrei, followed the international trend of ethnographic collections that aimed to represent traditional life.

These sociologists, as Verdery observed were strongly focused on the nation that became the grounding element in defining the canon of disciplines such as folklore or sociology:

The effect of all this carving up of disciplinary turf on the basis of the Nation was not only to bring into existence a more substantial material grounding for the Nation's defense, but also to embed the Nation permanently in intellectual discourse (Verdery, 1995, p. 132).

Museums created during that time embodied these ideas as they centred on peasants, often discussed as epitomising this national identity. The main aims of such institutions were to represent Romanians, rather than the multicultural composition of Romania. All museums discussed in this chapter, apart from the alternative exhibitions, are Romanian, albeit over time they have integrated multiculturalism in their collection, aiming to represent more than the majority, to represent traditions in Romania rather than only Romanian traditions. Although credited as the first exhibition in Romania, in 1908, the ASTRA museum, in Sibiu, was officially opened in the 1960s. The strong nationalist undertones in the museum description, characteristic of the time (Johler, 2015), are kept in its description today:

*Muzeul s-a născut din dorința românilor ardeleni de a-și defini propria identitate etnoculturală în conglomeratul etnic al Imperiul Austro-Ungar, pe fondul emancipării culturale a tuturor popoarelor din centrul și sud-estul Europei.*

[The museum was born from the wish of Ardeleni<sup>46</sup> Romanians to define their ethnocultural identity in the ethnic conglomerate of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, on the background of cultural emancipation of all people from Central and South-Eastern Europe.] (Primăria Sibiu, 2012, p. 8).

Over time, however, this museum has shifted its perspective towards representing diversity as well, perceived as a necessity for any 21<sup>st</sup> century museum. The Old Believer house that exists in the museum was brought in the 1970s. The other open-air museum discussed here, from Bucharest, had brought the Old Believer house approximately ten years earlier. The ethnographic museums discussed have been created much later when the awareness of

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<sup>46</sup> The region of the country where the museum is placed is called Ardeal, and the people who live there are 'ardeleni'.

multiculturalism was stronger. Although a precise timeline of inclusion of difference in official representations is difficult to deduce, it has become an essential part of the Romanian museum representations today.

## 7.5 Open-Air Museums

The first type of museum to be considered here is that of open-air museums, with two examples, one from Bucharest and one from Transylvania (Sibiu county). As Kevin Walsh noted, such museums are concerned ‘with representing humankind’s place in a world which was recognised as being constituted by fleeting and opaque experiences’ (Walsh, 2002, p. 18). The Old Believers are represented in these collections that include diverse traditional houses from across the country.

### 7.5.1 ‘Dimitrie Gusti’ Village Museum Bucharest

Created by the renowned sociologist Dimitrie Gusti as an open-air museum in 1936, the Village Museum in Bucharest today bears its creator’s name, the official name is *Muzeul Satului ‘Dimitrie Gusti’* (‘Dimitrie Gusti’ Village Museum). The concept of the museum, aligned with other museums of the time in Europe, included *in situ* exhibitions with dwellings from across Romania. In the fashion of the time, Dimitrie Gusti brought people to live here in the beginning, to be observed by the visitors as they conduct their lives. The living exhibits are long gone, yet the museum’s claim to cultural authority is predicated on arguments linked with authenticity, prominently featured in the discourse of the museum:

*Pe malul lacului Herăstrău, chiar în mijlocul capitalei României, vizitatorul de pretutindeni are bucuria de a întâlni un ‘sat’ adevărat, cu monumente și artefacte din sec. al 17-lea, până la începutul sec. 20; construcții reprezentative provenite din importante zone etnografice au recăpătat o a doua viață la Muzeul Național al Satului ‘Dimitrie Gusti’.*

[On the banks of Herăstrău river, in the centre of the Romanian capital, the visitor from everywhere has the joy to encounter a true ‘village’, with monuments and artefacts from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, representative buildings from major ethnographic areas have gained a second life at the National Village Museum ‘Dimitrie Gusti’.] (Muzeul Național al Satului, 2017b).

The museum promises thus a return to tradition, perceived as ‘temporal ideology’ (Noyes, 2009, p. 239), in opposition to modernity based on a narrative that such places act as “‘breathing spaces” in the (post-)modern world, which for many makes increasing demands on their stamina’ (Walsh, 2002, p. 97). Such settings also offer the necessary setting to engage in nostalgia (Boym, 2001), taking a self-assigned role as ‘shrines of nostalgia’ (Nederveen Pieterse, 1997b, p. 12):

*Românii, oricât ar fi de orășeni, au încă sufletul ‘plecat’ la țară, acolo unde îi cheamă copilăria și unde mai găsesc o fărâmbă de lume vie, adevărată.*

[Romanians, no matter how urban, they still have the soul ‘away’ in the countryside, there where childhood summons them and where they find a trace of the alive, real world.] (Longin Popescu, 2015).

The museum representatives’ discourses position the institution as a keeper of such nostalgic reminiscences. Moreover, an idealistic objective of its current administration is to instil new interest in village life through the museum’s activity. Speaking against the popular opinion that the village life of yore has disappeared in a world increasingly modernised, the museum director urged the media to stop representing Romanian villages as obsolete: ‘*Satul românesc trăiește!*’ [the Romanian village is alive!] (Longin Popescu, 2015).

While most of the houses in the open-air museum are Romanian, the exhibition includes two ethnic groups’ houses as well (Old Believers and Székelys – a Hungarian group from Transylvania). The Old Believer house comes from Jurilovca, it is dated from 1898, and was brought to the museum in 1963.

The museum’s online presentation of the house mentions:

*Prin stilul constructiv, elementele decorative și prin prezența masivă a uneltelor de pescuit, gospodăria de la Jurilovca constituie un document valoros de viață și muncă a unei populații care și-a găsit în România a doua sa patrie.*

[Due to its building style, its decorative elements and the massive presence of fishing tools, the Jurilovca dwelling constitutes a valuable document for the life and work of a population that found in Romania its second homeland.] (Muzeul Național al Satului, 2017a).



**Figure 7.7 The Old Believers' house at the Village Museum, Bucharest (source: Muzeul Național al Satului, 2017a)**

The online description carefully outlines the contents of the house, mentioning objects that were used for fishing and related activities. The distinctive decorative elements with blue and red have attracted numerous people's attention, and the image of the distinctive window of the house (figure 7.7) was used as illustration for the museums' anniversary poster (Muzeul Național al Satului, 2014a).

The panel outside the house (figure 7.8 on p. 200) which serves as the only information point, describes the Old Believers briefly and the content of the house and its special qualities, including:

*Interiorul impresionează prin sobele cu muluri colorate, cuptorul pentru dormit în bucătărie (specific zonei de proveniență a lipovenilor), perdelele croșetate, mobilierul și țesuturile, multe industriale deja, din care sunt realizate veșmintele specifice.*



[The interior impresses through its stoves with coloured mouldings, the oven for sleeping placed in the kitchen (specific for Lipovans origin area), crocheted curtains, the furniture and the fabrics, most of them already industrially made, of which specific clothes are made.]



**Figure 7.8 Panel outside Old Believer house in the Village Museum, Bucharest (photo by Ioana Sprangate, with permission)**

To illustrate the Old Believers' specific clothing, a recent photo with a middle aged Old Believer couple is included on this panel. The curator thus directs the visitor's gaze explaining what he/she should look for. The text also mentions:

*Remarcabile sunt picturile pe lemn și carton și mai ales icoanele rusești pe rit vechi, continuându-se tradiția satelor specializate de iconari din regiunea Volgăi și în zona Dobrogei, cunoscută pentru satele de iconari.*

[The wooden and carton paintings are remarkable and even more so are the Russian old-rite icons, continuing the tradition of specialised villages of iconographers in Volga region in the Dobrudja area, renowned for its iconographer villages.] (Radu, 2014).

Time stays still in the curator's worldview, yet there is a striking difference between my findings and these comments. As discussed in chapter 6 the number of iconographers is very low and only a few still exist in Dobrudja, some of them living in cities rather than villages. Other small errors in representation known only to a knowledgeable reader can be observed. The name of the patriarch is spelled as Nifon, rather than Nikon, the spelling of the equivalent Greek name. Moreover, the steam room is described not as a Russian sauna but as a Turkish bathroom. An in-depth discussion with a representative of the community would have easily fixed these, yet in 'proper' curatorial fashion the power over the representation lies only with the curator (Mihăilescu, 2009) and the community was not consulted.

In spite of these small disturbances, a sense of ownership and pride, similar to the one evidenced by a study of small alternative local museums in Romania (Mateescu, 2009), is present for Old Believers from Jurilovca as well (Amelian, 2007a). An article's title in *Zorile* is suggestive - 'At "home" at the Village Museum' – and its content outlines this connection:

*În Muzeului Satului, Jurilovca are o gospodărie specifică rușilor lipoveni, care păstrează vie tradiția și lumea satului de altădată. Pășind pragul ei, te identifice ușor cu realitatea vremurilor trecute și îți revin parcă în minte momente din viață, obiceiuri, toate fiind susținute de obiectele etnografice din jur. Revenirea noastră 'acasă' s-a făcut cu ocazia evenimentului aniversar petrecut în 'sat'.*

[In the Village Museum, Jurilovca has a dwelling specific for Lipovan Russians, who keep alive the tradition and life of the village life of yore. Crossing its threshold, you easily identify with the reality of past times and you recall moments from life, customs, all supported by the ethnographic objects around. Our return 'home' took place on the anniversary event in the 'village'.] (Anonymous, 2011, p. 19).

The link is manifested in the careful attention paid to the objects inside as well. Participating in an event meant to promote Romanian villages, organised by the association 'The Most Beautiful Villages' the delegation from Jurilovca offered an icon to museum representatives, as they had noticed that the original icon from the house had been stolen.

This is not uncommon for this village as the care for representation has placed Jurilovca at the forefront, winning the prize of ‘Cultural Village of the Year’ for 2015 (issue discussed further in chapter 8). The example is telling for the links that endure over time, and the way these are recreated through activities periodically.

To promote diversity, the museum organises events year-round (fairs, exhibitions and cultural activities) which include different ethnic groups in the country, marking special occasions such as the National Day of Minorities (discussed in chapter 1.3, 5.2 and 7.5). Moreover, ethnic groups are represented in occasional exhibitions, such as the exhibition ‘Belts in the ethnic groups’ cultures’ organised with support from the Russian Embassy and the Ethnography Museum from St. Petersburg, during the annual event the Days of Russian Culture (Miron, 2013). In 2013, the museum was also the host of a temporary exhibition presenting three generations of male iconographers from a family in Dobrudja (chapter 6.2). Supported by a local politician, the exhibition seemed to be the initiative of the craftsmen themselves. A researcher involved in the curation of this exhibition, explained:

*Cele două generații, cei doi Gurei nu sunt titrați însa au un simț deosebit al penelului. Mulți academiciști, academiciști între ghilimele, deținători de academie, nu sunt în stare să se ridice la valoarea redării credinței prin icoane așa cum reușesc ei.*

[The two generations, the two Gurei do not hold academic titles but they have a special sense of the brush. A lot of academicians, academicians in inverted commas, they are not capable to reach the value [of craftsmanship] to convey belief through icons the way they do.] (TVR+, 2013).

Officially opening the exhibition on December 18, on the National Day of Minorities in Romania (Tincoca, 2014), the director of ICEM Tulcea, a consortium of museums, Florin Topoleanu declared at the launch:

*Sunt foarte bucuroși de prezența unuia dintre puținii artiști meșteri populari care au rămas în Dobrogea în general. Este cam singurul din nordul Dobrogei, sunt puțini, din ce în ce mai puțini. Poate că modernismul își pune amprenta din ce în ce mai mult dar încercăm prin meseria pe care o avem, prin muzeul pe care îl conduc, să păstrăm această tradiție, să fim alături de acest om care pune mult*

*suflet, neașteptat de mult suflet, cu rezultate remarcabile după părerea noastră. Chiar prezența și găzduirea sa aici înseamnă ceva.*

[I am happy that one of the few craftsmen artists remaining in Dobrudja in general is here [today]. He is almost the only one in the North of Dobrudja, they are few, fewer and fewer. Maybe modernity is making its imprint more and more but we try through our job, through the museum that I manage, to keep this tradition, to support this man who puts a lot of soul, unexpected how much, with remarkable results in our opinion. His presence and hosting here means something.] (TVR+, 2013).

The curator and managerial representatives see themselves as validators, as a trademark for the craftsmen, those in charge of ‘authorised discourses’ (Smith, 2006). In the opening event, Paula Popoiu, the director of the museum expressed her initial reticence and said she was convinced by the quality of the work:

*Când senatorul Moțoc a venit aici să-mi propună acest proiect, am avut o anumită rețineră, care mi-a fost cu totul înlăturată atunci când acesta mi-a aratat DVD - ul cu lucrările. Se vedea în mod cert că este vorba de existența unui har artistic din ce în ce mai rar întâlnit în arta tradițională și am zis \*Da!\*. După cum vedeți, nu are de ce să-mi pară rău.*

[When senator Moțoc came to propose this project, I had a certain reservation, which was completely removed when he showed me the DVD with the works. It was clear that there is an artistic gift more and more difficult to find in traditional art and I said \*Yes!\*. As you can see I do not have a reason to be sorry.] (Tincoca, 2014).

An intriguing point is that while the exhibition represents different generations, the discourse and interviews only present one of the members. In their press release the museum mentions:

*Ineditul evenimentului se regăsește și în prezentarea, în premieră pe simezele muzeului nostru, a unei colecții exclusive de icoane și carte veche creștin-ortodoxă de rit vechi. Această credință i-a făcut pe străbunii lor, după 1654, să-și părăsească meleagurile natale și să se stabilească în Dobrogea, locul binecuvântat*

*de Dumnezeu să primească toate credințele și să le facă să traiască într-o deplină armonie.*

[The novelty of the event is that, for the first time, the museum's cymas hold an exclusivist collection of icons and Old Belief old books. This belief had forced their ancestors, after 1654, to leave their birthplace and get settled in Dobrudja, the land blessed by God to receive all faiths and make them live in perfect harmony.] (Muzeul Național al Satului, 2014b).

While this was, by all accounts, a private initiative, the museum listed this project under the ICH research programme in their yearly activity report, as component of the project 'Multicultural dialogue and local identity' (Muzeul Național al Satului, 2013). The exhibition was well attended, as another news mentions, both by cultural personalities and by the first lady at that moment, the Romanian president's wife, Maria Bănescu. This museum thus potentially offers many opportunities for Old Believers to represent themselves centre stage in the cultural life of the busy capital of Romania but their impact on existing exhibition items is limited.

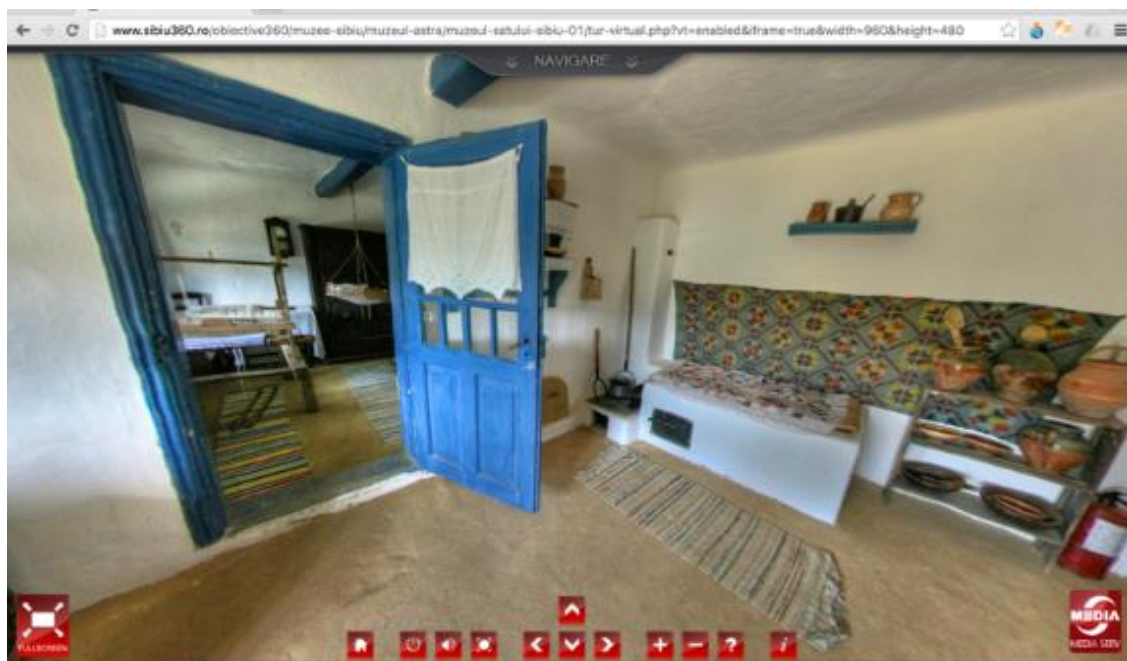
### **7.5.2 ASTRA Museum Sibiu**

Another similar open-air museum exists in Sibiu, Transylvania, *Complexul Național Muzeal ASTRA* (The ASTRA National Museum Complex – ASTRA Museum). This museum was not included in my fieldwork, although I had had the chance to visit it sometime before the PhD, the main documentation for this museum resulted from online materials, including a virtual exploration tool (Media Serv, 2010). This is also an open-air museum, the logic of the exhibition followed the different sectors of activity: trades, food production, food, public (social) spaces, transportation, spirituality, and milling.

Similar to the Bucharest museum, the museum promises an escape everyday concerns:

*O vizită în Muzeul în aer liber din Dumbrava Sibiului are și această caracteristică de a te face să uiți cu ușurință de problemele zilnice, transpunându-te într-o lume diferită, cu care înveți treptat să comunici.*

[A visit to the open-air museum in Sibiu's Grove also has this characteristic of making you easily forget about daily problems, carrying you into a different world with which you gradually learn to communicate.] (Muzeul ASTRA, 2012).



**Figure 7.9 Interior of Old Believer house in the ASTRA Museum - screenshot from the virtual exploration tool (source: Media Serv, 2010)**

The composition of this museum is more diverse, according to official accounts there are 18 dwellings in the museum representing 10 minorities, including Old Believers. The Old Believers' are included in the sector dedicated to food, as they are considered representative of fishing as a traditional activity (figure 7.9 on p. 205). This museum features several Old Believer settlements from Mahmudia (Tulcea county), including a house, a fisherman hut, a mill and a 'cherhana' (fishery) (Deleanu, 1997). The house is similar to the one in Bucharest, it is painted in white and blue and has a reed roof. In traditional fashion, it was dismantled in its original location and then rebuilt in the museum in 1970s. The interior of the house has been carefully considered, of course, and on the table in the main room there is a 'samovar'. Costumes and kerchiefs hang at the entrance, as if ready to be used at any time.

There is a strong current aim of ASTRA Museum to promote intercultural awareness:

*Complexul Național Muzeal ASTRA continuă acțiunile sale pentru cunoașterea etniilor din România, în speță etnia rromilor, fiind încredințat că o bună cunoaștere*

*a minorităților unui stat permite o conviețuire pașnică pe același teritoriu, cunoașterea ‘celuilalt’ ar putea înlătura o mare parte din temerile, presupunerile în privința acestor oameni.*

[The ASTRA National Museum Complex continues its actions for the awareness of Romanian ethnicities, especially Roma, believing that a good knowledge of the state minorities allows a peaceful cohabitation in the same territory, knowing ‘the Other’ might avert a great number of the fears, assumptions about these people.] (Muzeul ASTRA, 2016a).

The intention of promoting ethnic groups has proven fruitful as in 2009 the museum won a SEE Norway Grant, a shared initiative of funds offered jointly by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The museum received 3.5 million euro for a project named: ‘*Patrimoniul deschis. Creșterea accesibilității publicului la valorile multietnice din patrimoniul Muzeului ASTRA*’ [Open heritage. Increasing public accessibility to multi-ethnic values from the patrimony of ASTRA Museum]. The project served several purposes, including the preservation of buildings and the creation of new spaces such as a multicultural pavilion that would

*creșterea accesibilității fizice a publicului larg la valorile multietnice din patrimoniul Muzeului ASTRA și preservarea colecțiilor pentru generațiile viitoare.* [increase physical accessibility of the general audience to the multi-ethnic values in the ASTRA Museum patrimony and preserving the collections for future generations.] (Muzeul ASTRA, 2016c).

While lip-service is paid to the idea of multicultural objects, there is little reference in the project description about how this new building might serve different ethnic groups. Using the funding the museum has organised a series of activities dedicated to multiculturalism, which include crafts presentations, conferences, museum education, music festival, as well as fishing demonstrations and culinary and crafts workshops (Muzeul ASTRA, 2016b).

Within the same project, they created a series of documentaries, one of them presenting the Old Believers from Mila 23. The documentary presents both fishermen and one of the local choirs (Muzeul ASTRA, 2016d). The choice of this particular village is not explained, given that it is neither one of the largest in terms of Old Believer population nor the locality



from which the house in the museum came (Mahmudia). My guess is that the choice is linked with the name of the most famous Old Believer of the moment, Ivan Patzaichin, an active promoter of the village (discussed in chapter 8). The guess is somewhat confirmed by a press release for a recent event which aimed to promote the Romanian national blouse, where the same people were invited to sing and cook, as the press release mentions, no less than 21 fish courses (Muzeul ASTRA, 2015). The reasoning behind associating Old Believers with an event aimed to promote Romanianness objectified in the traditional blouse is not explained. The inclusion of Mila 23 Old Believers in such events organised by the museum indicates a strong preference for this group, although any of the Old Believers villages and cities in the Northern part of the country are more readily accessible, in terms of travelling. The choice might be pointing to the bias in representation, as discussed in the case of media representations (chapter 5), and to the exoticism of Old Believers (discussed in relation to tourism in chapter 8).

## 7.6 Ethnographic Museums



**Figure 7.10 Diorama with Old Believers in the Museum of Ethnography and Popular Art, Tulcea**



Old Believers artefacts are not incorporated in many museums in the country, it is mostly in museums situated in geographic areas with large Old Believer populations that the visitor would find such items. As Riegel argued ‘museums exhibit cultures from within a certain logic of representation’ (1995, p. 84) and the logic behind ethnographic museums of the southern part of Romania seems to be centred on representing multiculturalism from a positive perspective. This is framed in the prevalent understanding that Dobrudja has historically been a multicultural area where the different ethnicities have lived together in harmony (Ascherson, 1995; Van Assche *et al.*, 2009; Van Assche and Teampău, 2009).

### **7.6.1 Museum of Ethnography and Popular Art**

The *Muzeul de Etnografie și Artă Populară* (Museum of Ethnography and Popular Art) from Tulcea, part of ICEM Tulcea, was opened in the 2000 in a heritage building dating from the 1920s. Given the considerations mentioned above, it comes as no surprise that is designed on this principle:

*Patrimoniul Muzeului de Etnografie și Artă Populară reflectă, prin diversitatea colecțiilor, un model cultural unic generat de conviețuirea etnică dintre români și celelalte populații. Cele aproximativ 8.000 de piese alcătuiesc un fond etnografic inestimabil decodificabil în cadrul colecțiilor de artă populară și port popular, etnografie și foto-document.*

[The patrimony of the Museum of Ethnography and Popular Art reflects, through its diverse collections, a unique cultural model given by the ethnic cohabitation between Romanian and the other populations. The approximately 8,000 pieces [in its collection] represent an inestimable ethnographic stock decodable in folk art collections, ethnographies, and photo-documents.] (ICEM Tulcea, 2016).

The main exhibition is rarely modified and is named ‘Dobrudjan multiculturalism’. It presents:

*aspecte ale identității culturale ale diferitelor populații care au conviețuit de-a lungul timpului în Dobrogea și care continuă să trăiască în armonie și astăzi.*

[aspects of the cultural identity of the different populations that have cohabitated throughout time in Dobrudja and which continue to live in harmony today] (MEAP Tulcea, 2011).

The exhibition is all included on one floor and the visitor is led through a series of rooms that present dioramas with different ethnic groups (figure 7.10 on p. 207 represents the Old Believers). To emphasise dialogue, different ethnicities are presented in the same room, each of them given a corner of the room. This *in situ* exhibition presents a domestic scene, the woman is in the process of placing a ‘*rubashka*’ on the bed, while the man sits on the opposite side of the bed with the ‘*harmoshka*’ (accordion) open as if singing. The domestic setting also includes a beautiful wooden icon corner, as I have encountered in one of the Old Believers houses visited. The visitor’s understanding is guided by a series of texts. The labels are minimal, indicating mainly names of objects. The visitor can find out more details from an extended text included on a two-sided A4 paper which briefly presents each ethnic group. In addition, the curators have also followed an *in context* logic and placed a series of panels with photos on the walls that, mostly including black and white archive photos. As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) observed, mixing the two perspectives is relatively common. In this case, it expands the representation and provides a link with local community, as most pictures are from the area.

### **7.6.2 Danube Delta Eco-Tourism Museum Centre**

Another museum that uses dioramas to present Old Believers in Tulcea, also part of ICEM Tulcea, is *Centrul Muzeal Ecoturistic Delta Dunării* (the Danube Delta Eco-Tourism Museum Centre). The museum aims to represent both the natural and cultural heritage of the area through a mix of different types of display. The ground floor has large water tanks with local fish. On the first floor, the ecosystem of the Danube Delta is presented through a series of informative kiosks, that cover issues from the types of plants to the multicultural human composition of the area. The second floor includes a series of dioramas aimed at presenting the fishermen of the Delta (figure 7.11 on p. 210). While there is no clear indication that one is a Romanian or an Old Believer, the fishermen wear the distinctive clothes of the Old Believers, including the ‘*poias*’. The set of dioramas present different activities, from catching fish, to selling it, as well as the ‘*lotka*’ discussed in chapter 8.3.

Blending information with entertainment, the curator has also included a recipe of fish soup, made the Danube Delta way (represented in figure 7.11 and discussed further in chapter 8.4).

Old Believers seem to have caught the attention not only of such official museums, but also of curators of smaller exhibitions, created at the local level, which will be discussed next.



**Figure 7.11 Exhibits in the Danube Delta Eco-Tourism Museum Centre**

## 7.7 Local Museums



**Figure 7.12 Exhibits in a local village museum**

As Mihăilescu (2009) observed local museums have appeared all over Romania, from small personal collections to wider initiatives that include multiple members of the community.

I have found such a museum in a small village in the northern part of Romania (figure 7.12 on p. 210). Not listed anywhere in museum databases, it was only through a recommendation that I have discovered this museum, just like Mateescu (2009). According to the museum custodian and initiator, the museum aims to represent the local life of yore. It was, moreover, a strategic choice, as European development funds evaluations allocate extra points for villages with museums. To create this project, the custodian elicited the help of a specialised ethnographer from Iasi. Constructed as a regular house, with different rooms, this museum stored several Old Believers pieces of clothing on a rack. These were gathered from the community and all had the different owner names fastened on them with pins. A brief introduction into fashion tastes of the last century was thus available, as the museum exhibited fashionable (even by today's standards) jackets, '*poias*', '*rubashka*', shirts, and '*bicheshka*'<sup>47</sup> (male winter jacket made of wool). The scarcity of items was attributed to a dearth of willingness to let go of such precious inheritances. From visits to Old Believers, it seemed that such objects, if deemed important, were stored with other dowry items, away from curious eyes and hardly ever worn or used.



**Figure 7.13 'Lotka' Museum Mila 23**

<sup>47</sup> This is a local term; the Russian name equivalent is '*poddevka*'.

Another museum considered in this section is a new, private initiative as well. Its existence is linked with the former kayak international champion Ivan Patzaichin, a man of considerable popularity amongst Old Believers. Associated with a major public relations agency in Romania, the former sportsman has started a series of projects aimed at promoting the Danube and Delta and his fellow Old Believers (as discussed further in chapter 8). In 2013, *Asociația Ivan Patzaichin* (the Ivan Patzaichin Association)<sup>48</sup>, created an open-air ‘museum’, named *Muzeul Lotcii Mila 23* (Lotka Museum Mila 23) with public cultural funding. As the founders explain in an interview, the initial idea was to present the numerous champions that were born in the village.

The result is a series of panels that present the champions (figure 7.13 on p. 211) and their memories of the ‘*lotka*’, ‘*elementul identitar cel mai important din Delta*.’ [the most important identity element in the Delta] (*Asociația Ivan Patzaichin*, 2014). Although the title contains the name museum, the project is described as public art and as an ‘alternative museum’. As the press release mentions:

*Proiectul valorifică patrimoniul material și imaterial din Delta Dunării, recuperând într-un mod inedit elemente de tradiție și cultură locală, evidențiind perfectă articulare a acestora cu peisajul natural. Prin toate aceste aspecte, ‘muzeul’ interpretează lotca sub forma unui element de legătură între diferitele identități etnice și culturale care alcătuiesc spațiul Deltei, punctând aspecte concrete din viața și tradiția acestor comunități.*

[The project harnesses the intangible and tangible heritage of the Danube Delta, retrieving in a unique manner elements of local culture and tradition, outlining their perfect articulation with the natural landscape. Through all these aspects, ‘the museum’ interprets the ‘*lotka*’ as a connecting element between the different ethnic and cultural identities that form the Delta space, pointing to concrete details from the lives and traditions of these communities.] (*Asociația Ivan Patzaichin*, 2013).

The museum presents rowers from Mila 23 and nearby villages, both Romanian and Old Believers, and their achievements are collated on one of the big boards. For a village of about 500 inhabitants, having had more than 20 Olympic champions over the years, is an

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<sup>48</sup> The association is managed in collaboration with a popular Romanian PR agency, DC Communication.

impressive record. A series of eight other boards present eight major champions, one at a time. The details include information about when they were born, which village, what club they belonged to, as well as world and Olympic achievements. These are coupled with black and white pictures and representative quotes. Imbued with nostalgia, the memories included project a special relationship with the '*lotka*':

The long boat was our life. Sometimes we would even sleep in it. There were nights when there was no time to come back from among the reeds and you would fall sleep in the boat. [...] I have a brother who had his wedding in boats, one spring, when the waters were high. The wedding was on two huge boats tied together like a deck. 40-50 people were dancing on the boats at one time. The boat was everywhere in our lives. To ensure that you would not be washed away you tied the boat to the door handle. If the high waters came, you would step out of the house into the boat. This was life in the Delta, a challenge. You had to defeat the waters to survive. (text from a panel in the museum given in English)

This museum thus offers another example of collaboration to build a coherent representation.

In Mahmudia, a village in the Delta, another 'mini-museum' appeared in 2011. This museum named *Casa Pescarului* (the House of the Fisherman) received funding from the Global Environment Fund. The museum was part of a larger project aimed at promoting Mahmudia as a tourist destination, which received a funding of 100,000\$ (Anore, 2011a). These smaller museums create a different relationship with the represented audience. Emphasising their locality, they build a more intimate relationship with the objects exhibited (Mikula, 2015). Yet, for Old Believers even such a relationship is not completely satisfactory, as proved by the claims to an insider's museum discussed in the next section.

## **7.8 Ownership Claims and Alternative Old Believers Exhibitions**

During fieldwork, the idea of establishing a dedicated Old Believers museum was raised several times as some informants felt the need to have a space where they could represent themselves. Considering their lack of trust that outsider researchers could capture the intricacies of the Old Believer culture, it is not surprising they felt the need for a representation created by insiders. To this date, there is no Old Believer-curated permanent

exhibition in a Romanian museum, or a museum that is initiated and belongs exclusively to Old Believers. Being able to express themselves in an official setting such as a museum is linked with identity as Sharon Macdonald observed:

Museums have promoted and legitimized individual collecting practices and have provided exemplars for them. Moreover, they have helped to define the potential value of objects and their salience for identity work, and have established a cultural model in which collected material performs individual distinctiveness (Macdonald, 2006, p. 95).

The link between identity and museum representation seemed obvious for some informants; several Old Believers I met in had an initiative for a local museum. To this end, an Old Believer from Jurilovca gathered materials from his area and put these together in a project named *Punct Muzeal Jurilovca* (Museum Point Jurilovca) (CIMEC, 2016). During several repeated visits to the village the building was closed and I later discovered that the tourist point was closed indefinitely.

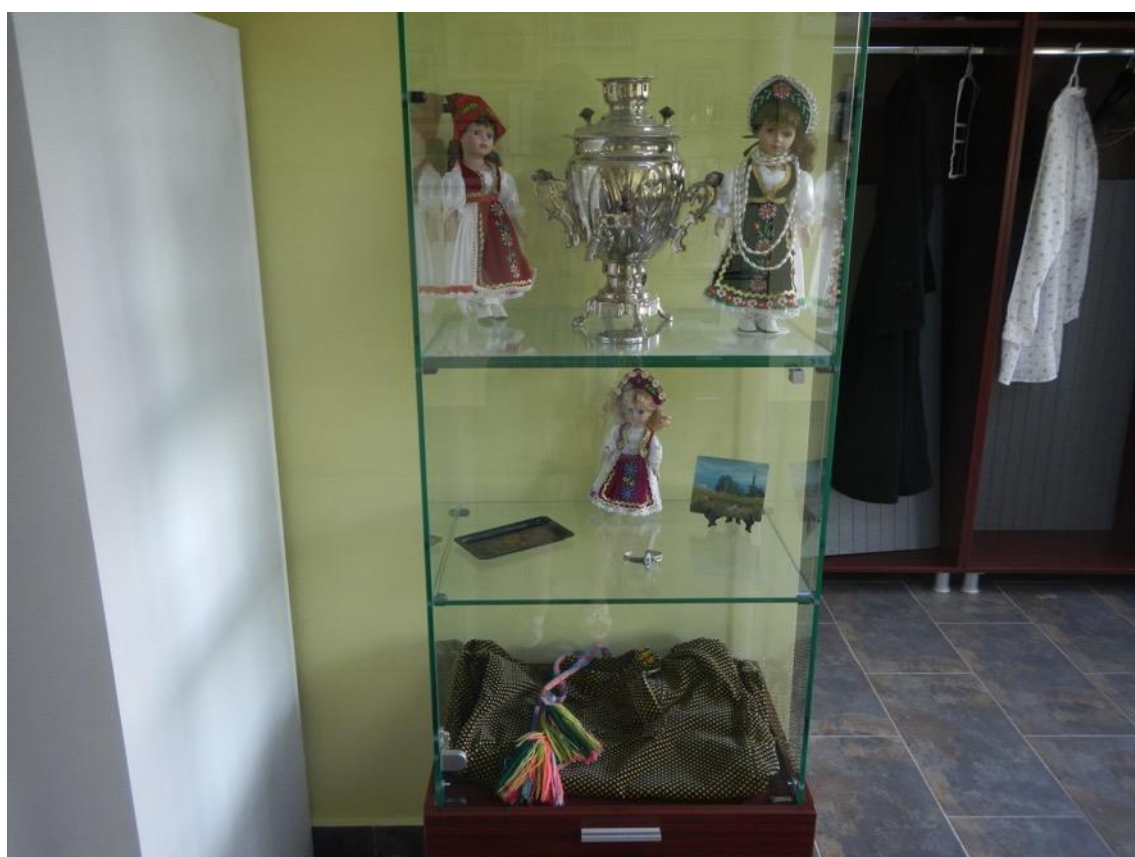
In the absence of an established forum to represent themselves, Old Believers have turned the NGO headquarters in alternative museums (figure 7.14 on p. 215). The preoccupation of Old Believers with representation in an established institution is not surprising, as Sharon Macdonald argued about museums: ‘precisely because they have become global symbols through which status and community are expressed, they are subject to appropriation and the struggle for ownership’ (Macdonald, 1996, p. 2).

In this line, the idea of creating a museum has appeared time and time again in their magazine, *Zorile*, proposed several times at the yearly NGO meetings (Anore, 2008):

*Tot legat de păstrarea tradițiilor, s-a reamintit posibilitatea înființării unui muzeu al etniei noastre, de ce nu, poate chiar câte un mini-muzeu în fiecare localitate. Dl. Bariz Sava din Plopana, județul Bacău, chiar a venit pregătit cu câteva documente și fotografii cu o vechime considerabilă, de pe vremea bunicului și străbunicului său, documente pe care le-a predat Comunității spre păstrare, făcând primul pas spre constituirea acestui muzeu al CRLR.*



[Concerning the preservation of traditions, the possibility of creating a museum of our ethnic group was recalled, maybe even a mini-museum in each locality. Mr. Bariz Sava from Plopana, Bacău county, even came prepared with some documents and photos of considerable age, from the time of his grandfather and great-grandfather, documents that he gave the Community to keep, making the first step for the creation of a CRLR museum] (Fedot, 2005a).



**Figure 7.14 Display unit in NGO headquarter**

The articles indicate that at some point the project of creating a museum seemed to be underway, as the organisation issued a call for acquisition or donations of artefacts (A.B., 2005, p. 22), but has yet to be finalised in the last 10 years. In 2006, several articles in *Zorile* contained a call for a museum of and by Old Believers (Vișan, 2006b; Amelian, 2006), as contributors outlined the necessity to create such an institution, perceived as an effort for preserving identity:

*Consider că această măsură ar trebui luată, și cât se poate de repede, și de Comunitatea Rușilor Lipoveni, în cadrul etniei amenințarea cu pierderea identității naționale este foarte viabilă. Până acum, tradițiile și obiceiurile specifice nouă ne-*



*au fost transmise pe cale orală, din generație în generație, și suntem conștienți că foarte multe dintre acestea s-au pierdut*

[I believe such a measure should be taken, and fast, by the Community of Lipovan Russians, in the ethnic group the threat of losing national identity is very feasible. Until now, our specific traditions and customs were transmitted orally, from generation to generation, and we are aware that many were lost] (Amelian, 2006, p. 13).

The view the author takes is that this museum should resemble an open-air museum, similar to the ones that already exist:

*Încă mai există câteva gospodării reprezentative în satele noastre, cu casele încărcate de motive florale, dantelării și vetrinice, cu ferestre mici, brodate cu tot felul de modele și culori vii, ce ar putea adăposti unelte specifice activităților care ne reprezintă, veșminte bisericești și cele zilnice, purtate încă de bătrânii noștri, cărți vechi aduse din patria-mamă, icoane de o valoare inestimabilă, toate acestea la un loc făcând obiectul unui respectabil muzeu.*

[There are still a few representative houses in our villages, with houses filled with floral motifs, laces and tansies, with small windows, decorated with all sorts of models and vivid colours, that could shelter tools for activities that represent us, church and daily clothing, still worn by our elders, books brought from the homeland, invaluable icons, all these together make the object of a reputable museum.] (Amelian, 2006, p. 13).

Although several articles mention existing museums (Bucă, 2005; Pocorschi, 2008), NGO representatives and academics deny this. It is more likely that these initiatives could represent small alternative museums. In the absence of an established forum for representing themselves have turned the NGO headquarters into alternative museums (Visan, 2005; Erastov, 2009; Serbov and Ivanov, 2016). The quote from above includes the various material possessions that objectify the idea of an Old Believer identity. It comes as little surprise then that these objects mentioned here often filled the small improvised exhibitions found in local NGO branches during fieldwork. Other small initiatives might exist throughout the country, such as a ‘cabinet’ in a school in Carcaliu (Chirnogea, 2008),

which reminds me of the old cabinet of curiosities. Such smaller initiatives come to fill a gap that Old Believers feel it is left by the absence of a dedicated museum, yet as discussed in the examples presented by Kreps (2006), people's access to such displays is limited.

## 7.9 Conclusion

This analysis of materiality is fragmentary, as other issues could have found their place in the chapter such as churches or houses, yet they would necessitate a different theoretical base whose inclusion would have exceeded the limits of this thesis. As Keane's model for understanding materiality suggests, the key to attributing a certain function to an object relies in the intangible, that is values and meanings rather than in its specific material qualities. The analysis of the various objects considered revolves around the idea of change, of adapting objects' production to current circumstances. Sometimes, as in the case of the '*kokoshnik*' they reflect choices made to adopt certain external elements considered representative for Russianness (Clopot, 2016b). The resurgence of the ethnic costume for choir groups (discussed further in section 8.5) shows an interesting pattern, that revitalised traditions include materiality as well. The analysis of tangible heritage items thus reinforces not the idea of an untainted authenticity of material expression through such objects, but rather that of adaptation to current realities of life and even that of hybridity. Moreover, it emphasises the loss of heritage, as the limited number of craftspersons available in the country poses problems for the sustainability of such practices.

The analysis of material culture in official collections, developed in the second part of the chapter, shows that Old Believers consider they need to create a museum curated by themselves. This echoes the findings of researchers that outline a growing awareness among minority groups of the need to control representations of themselves:

minority community groups and indigenous peoples are also increasingly assertive in demanding that this representation is not undertaken without their consent and only with their input (Watson, 2007, p. 14).

As Macdonald (2013, p. 152) observed, including something in a museum setting extends its life: 'by maintaining the objects of such lives through time – musealising them – the ways of life themselves in a sense live on'. It is in this sense that such representation is

sought here, as a saviour of dying traditions. Official museums' representations are created by Romanians rather than Old Believers and thus can do very little to support such objectives. Representations are always partial (Watson, 2007), contoured by the limits of knowledge and points of view of the curator, and, sometimes fall into stereotypes, as discussed above. One shortcoming of the museums discussed here is their emphasis on materiality, 'as if the world is assembled by our eyes for our minds' (Riegel, 1995, p. 86), and there is little place for the intangible apart from short projects such as the temporary exhibition dedicated to icon painting. That exhibition, however, was centred on icons as objects as well and did not represent the craft process itself. There are thus various limits to building comprehensive representations of Old Believers in museum settings and these have not passed unnoticed. Whereas this chapter focused on the material culture, the last chapter of analysis in this thesis concentrates on the effects of touristic activities.

## **8. Heritage and Tourism**

It was towards the middle of August 2015 when I made my way to the Old Believers' village close to the Danube Delta, yet autumn seemed to have settled in ahead of time. A series of days of rain and storm ensued, stalling my attempts to venture off around the village. Yet it was the last chance to hear the choir singing in the nearby resort, across the big lake, and together with my host we tried to find a boat that would venture out, an endeavour that seemed very difficult given the bad weather. Luckily, some other tourists appeared as well and soon there were enough people to fill a boat. The trip was not easy and the one coming back was even more difficult, high currents made sailing rough and water raised above boat level behind us, some found its way in the boat. The choir was not dressed in traditional clothing at the time and as we sailed they discussed worldly matters and planned the evening. Quiet during the half hour trip, as soon as we approached the shore the women in the boat started shouting and singing, so that tourists would hear them coming. Raising expectations for the show that was about to take place, they continued their journey with song to the back room of the restaurant where they changed in traditional costume. I was pondering on their shift from regular traveller to entertainer, and walking behind them I watched how people stopped to look with curiosity. Soon after they made their grand entrance, accompanied by a man playing the accordion. As the weather was quite cold, they had decided to perform in the restaurant not on the beach by the camp fire as they would usually do. Many people gathered around as they sang song after song, the younger members of the group inviting people to dance as well. As the evening ended they changed back into their regular outfits and left together with tourists, switching to their role of simple travellers again. The shift from traveller to entertainer and back, this grabbing of attention with Russian song, made me ponder on the way this cultural performance was organised and the spectacle offered to uninformed tourists.

Building on data from my informants and on my own experience as tourist and researcher, this chapter considers the intertwining of ethnic heritage and tourism. First, the larger framework for the analysis of tourism and associated activities is discussed. This is followed by an analysis of the opportunities to develop touristic activities in the Dobrudja area. The chapter also discusses the use of reified cultural resources, such as singing traditions and festival, to enhance tourists' experiences.

## 8.1 The Tourism Context

Marking disruptions of the regular course of life (Urry and Larsen, 2011), tourism activities have become part and parcel of our daily lives. Studies of tourism are often based on the host-guest dichotomy. On the part of guests, choices of places to visit, sometimes informed by narratives (Bendix, 2002), are suggestive not only for an analysis of destinations but also for that of identities as well (Jones, 2010; Light, 2015). While it might seem that there are limitless possibilities, researchers point out that the tourist's interpretation of a place is guided by a framework developed over time:

Gazing at particular sights is conditioned by personal experiences and memories and framed by rules and styles, as well as by circulating images and texts of this and other places (Urry and Larsen, 2011, p. 2).

The word 'gaze' in the paragraph above is key, as this is the central influential concept developed by John Urry (further refined in collaboration with Jonas Larsen). The constructive nature of the 'gaze' implies that a tourist's experience starts long before the actual trip, as 'looking is a learned ability' (Urry and Larsen, 2011, p. 2) and the tourist has absorbed information through different media. Once on holiday, his way of seeing is already framed by the previous knowledge accumulated. Urry and Larsen (2011) discuss the different types of gazes and classify the most intrusive one as the 'anthropological gaze' whereby the tourist aims to experience life as locals do.

The media, with their power to impose images and ideas, play an important part in shaping touristic imaginaries (Crouch, Jackson and Thompson, 2005). Yet, this recourse should not be time consuming on the part of the viewer:

culture must be simplified for tourist consumption, with the culture on display transformed into iconic visuals and accompanied by standardized ethnographic information presented on tour (Salazar, 2013, p. 674).

Apart from this management of representations, other processes also need to take place to shape heritage resources (Bendix, 2009a) as tourist attractions: 'to compete for tourists, a location must become a destination, and heritage is one of the ways locations do this' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1995, p. 373).

With reference to Urry's framework, such objects and practices are used to produce a certain effect, construct a narrative that is objectified semiotically in these manifestations: 'when we gaze as tourists what we see are various signs or tourist clichés' (Urry and Larsen, 2011, p. 17). Sometimes, these narratives draw on ethnic heritage, playing on their exotism (Salazar, 2013), and such groups undergo changes to reflect the external image presented outside their community. Noel Salazar proposes the term 'tourismification' (Salazar, 2009) to define the deliberate actions taken to alter lives to reflect the mediated images better. In his study of Maasai in Tanzania, he argues that under the influence of media representations:

many Maasai now portray 'traditional' versions of themselves for tourists, maintaining a well-developed sense of self-objectification and self-commodification (Salazar, 2009, p. 60).

The tourist, seeking authenticity (MacCannell, 1999), might interpret these as signs of genuineness. Behind such searches for the authentic (chapter 2.4), at times in the most artificial settings (AlSayyad, 2013) there is often a recourse to 'exo-nostalgia' (Berliner, 2012, p. 781) (discussed in chapter 2.3). Access to an idealised version of the past is sometimes used as a key selling point and such groups project themselves as preservers of otherwise lost and authentic traditions.

Many studies emphasise the changes that an increased touristic activity brings at community level (Banaszkiewicz, Graburn and Owsianowska, 2017; Ivan, 2017) and my concern here is similar. Cultural representations and performances are analysed with reference to larger processes, as Ivan (2017, p. 12) observed 'tourism is not the dominant trigger of cultural change, but a catalyst that quickens the changes already occurring in the context of globalisation'.

Studies of tourism differentiate between different categories based on scale (small-scale or mass-tourism) as well as based on the type of experience (such as cultural or adventure tourism) and other criteria. Of interest here is not the entire range of tourist experiences but two main categories: small-scale tourism taking place in rural areas (Zorzoliu and Iatagan, 2009; Gibson *et al.*, 2011) and eco-tourism (Russell, 2007). Ethnic heritage is often used as a strategic resource in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (Silverman, 2005; Isnart, 2015) where 'local folklore, heritage and customs might be the driving force in

developing rural and agro-tourism' (Murzyn, 2008, p. 325). In such places, as Graburn (2015, p. 184) observes 'everything is represented in a "folkloric regime", which draws upon a somewhat idealised nostalgic past, not on today's world with its problems and anomalies'.

## **8.2 The Festival as Performance**

One of the prevalent themes in the analysis of tourism activities in post-socialist Europe is that of valorising multiculturalism:

The legacy of cultures of ethnic, religious, social minorities, which was treated with secondary importance for decades, or even 'erased' from memory, education, discourse and public space, becomes, in new reality, the foundation for creating attractions and tourism products (Banaszkiewicz, Graburn and Owsianowska, 2017, p. 113).

A common instrument used to effortlessly capitalise on this is the organisation of festivals that can encompass in one closed celebration a multitude of ethnic and cultural heritages. Events and festivals are readily-available tools to attract crowds of tourists as 'festivals are cultural performances par excellence' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, p. 61). Organisers seem to follow Getz's (2010, p. 5) contention that festivals are 'tools in tourism and economic development, or in place marketing and the selling of attractions and venues'. The concept of performance is key to this discussion:

at its most encompassing, performance may be seen as broadly metacultural, a cultural means of objectifying and laying open to scrutiny culture itself, for culture is a system of systems of signification (Bauman, 1992, p. 47).

Festivals are defined here, following Stoeltje (1992, p. 261) as events that 'occur at calendrically regulated intervals and are public in nature, participatory in ethos, complex in structure and multiple in voice, scene, and purpose'. I differentiate here between festivals and performances, as the festivals are a particular genre of the latter, whereby performance is defined along the lines noted by Kapchan (1995, p. 479):

performances are aesthetic practices - patterns of behavior, ways of speaking, manners of bodily comportment-whose repetitions situate actors in time and space, structuring individual and group identities.

As Kapchan observes a link exists between performance, and by implication of festivals, and tradition, which is enacted or reconsidered in the process. The festival, as a genre of cultural performance, has a dual role as it: 'transforms the social, psychological, and emotional being while, at the same time, it experientially enfolds the individual into the group' (Kapchan, 1995, p. 480). Researchers have also pointed out that the participatory aspect of these events strengthens belonging (Gibson *et al.*, 2011) and boosts pride in locality (Kozorog, 2011). They are useful in large-scale community-building exercises (Winter, 2007), or responses to social issues (Bendix, 1989). Festivals can take different forms and serve different aims for the community that has created them. Sometimes they help communities otherwise invisible by drawing the attention of national and international audiences (Kozorog, 2011). Such events bring in visitors and generate revenue while raising the profile of these places, as festivals 're-enact, re-present, and re-create activities and places in a discrete performance setting designed for the specular (and aural) commerce' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, p. 66). Festivals, especially folkloric ones, also relate to identity-work. As identity is 'something actively and continually recreated and negotiated' (Smith, 2006, p. 83) they offer privileged arenas for self-expression and redefinitions of self through performance.

### **8.3 Revitalisation through Tourism**

The Danube Delta has a World Heritage nomination for its natural characteristics of 'outstanding universal value' based on its unique ecosystem of birds and fishes (UNESCO, 2017a). The area has been protected as a natural reserve park by Romanian legislation since 1990 and a dedicated organisation, *Rezervația Biosferei Delta Dunării* (Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve) ensures the management of the area. Over the years, fishing, the traditional occupation in the area, has become unsustainable as a sole means of income (Ivan, 2017). Due to poaching and over-fishing (Soare, Zugravu and Costachie, 2012), new legislation has been enforced to protect the fish population following the regime change in 1989, and further on harmonised with European law after Romania entered the EU in 2007. On different occasions, inhabitants of fishing villages have commented on the diminishing



stock of fish, while researchers have criticised existing statistics arguing that they are unreliable as they do not account for domestic and touristic private consumption (Ivan, 2017).

These developments have produced unwanted effects in small villages that mainly relied on this occupation for their way of life, especially for those villages that are separated from inland by water (Naumescu, 2010). Immigration has become part and parcel of everyday life and many villagers have used their fishing skills to gain jobs in other countries with strong fishing industries. Some of the villages and cities in these areas have turned to tourism as an alternative, developing an informal economy of small-scale tourism (Constantin, 2015; Ivan, 2017) that capitalises on the potential of the area to attract both external and internal audiences (Soare, Zugravu and Costachie, 2012). The path of tourism development has also been uneven and often reliant on private initiatives rather than government-level ones (Light and Dumbrăveanu, 1999) and in the areas of the Danube Delta a thriving small-scale system was developed based on homestays, fishing trips and culinary offers (Iorio and Corsale, 2010; Iorga, 2015; Ivan, 2017).

Some of the homestays in the area operate as legally-recognised businesses and contribute to the development of the local economy. A significant part of the tourism in the Danube Delta is also based on shadow economy, with the inns and food services providers provided not registered with the state (Maftai, 2014). Such initiatives do not usually generate jobs for large numbers of people, they are usually family-run activities (Ivan, 2017). The small businesses of this sort are in competition with larger operators such as hotels and larger inns that have an increased capacity and offer better conditions thus attracting tourists more. The sustainability of smaller initiatives such as the homestays and the events discussed here is threatened by such initiatives. The events and festivals in the area benefit from funding, some of them, such as the Borscht festival discussed in chapter 8.4, began as a project funded through European Union funds and at the time of fieldwork was supported by earnings from previous editions. Development projects based on European funding have appeared over the years in the area, such as the recent national project for integrated territorial investment, estimated to include funding of 2 billion euros until 2020. Such projects tend to be developed by Romanian businessmen or local authorities rather than Old Believers. Moreover, the villages and cities in areas with touristic potential have development strategies that provide businesses local funding in addition to external sources.

Significant growth has been registered in the area since the 1990s, and as Light, Young and Czepczyński (2009, p. 235) observe ‘much of the early post-socialist boom in tourism in CEE was associated with heritage tourism’ that included both urban but most often rural tourism based on surviving traditions ‘very attractive to Western tourists seeking an experience of the pre-modern rural “Other”’ (2009, p. 235). Authorities have also become further interested in this sector and even though the legislation system is not yet very efficient (Iorio and Corsale, 2010), tourism is included in the rural development strategy of the *Ministerul Dezvoltării Naționale* (Ministry of National Development) at national level:

*Sprijinirea conservării patrimoniului local și a tradițiilor contribuie nu numai la sporirea calității vieții în zonele rurale, ci stimulează activitățile de turism rural, dezvoltarea mărcilor locale și crearea de locuri de muncă.*

[Supporting the conservation of local heritage and traditions contributes not only to improving the quality of life in rural areas, but also stimulates rural tourism activities, development of local brands and creates employment opportunities.] (Ministerul Dezvoltării Naționale, 2014).

As Graburn (2015) observed in his study of ethnic tourism in China, the economic advancement of localities is not the sole concern, there is also an interest to attract international attention. This observation is valid for rural and urban areas in the Dobrudja area, as a representative of a government organisation dedicated to tourism explained, tourism is designed for both internal and external audiences:

*Avem un proiect agreat la nivel European, ca Dunărea, și perla ei Delta Dunării, ca destinație competitivă la nivel mondial. [...] Căutăm să aducem atât Dunărea cât și Delta în întregul său în atenția turiștilor, nu numai români și europeni, dar americani, australieni, japonezi și așa mai departe. Adică vizăm chiar piețele speciale, piața China, Brazilia și așa mai departe, ori pentru asta trebuie să avem un nivel de conformitate a serviciilor care să ne permită să concurăm cu marile destinații mondiale.*

[We have a project agreed at European level, to promote the Danube and its pearl, the Delta, as competitive destination at global level. [...] We want to bring the Danube and the entire Delta to the attention of tourists, not only Romanian and

European, but also American, Australian, Japanese and so on. We even target special markets such as China, Brazil and others, and for these we need to have services that can compete with major world destinations.] (TVR+, 2016c).

In this effort to bring in tourists both locals and local authorities point to the cultural and natural richness of the area. A meeting place for different ethnic groups from old times (Van Assche *et al.*, 2009), the area has significant historic remains (some from ancient times). The distinctive world-class natural setting is then complemented by elements of culture in promotional activities. One such location which brings the three elements together is Jurilovca, a village with mixed Old Believer and Romanian population and located in the south-eastern part of Romania. The proposal offered by Old Believers for tourists is briefly summed up by this passage:

*Sunt oameni care s-au săturat de hotel și vor ceva tradițional. Avem pensiuni care sunt pline în sezon, dar și mulți turiști care vor să vină și să stea direct la oameni, la lipoveni, să mănânce o ciorbă de pește preparată ‘ca la mama acasă’.*

[There are people who are tired of hotel[s] and they want something traditional. We have inns that are filled during the season, but there are also a lot of tourists who want to come and stay with people, Lipovans, to eat a fish soup like mother would cook [homemade].] (Curte, 2015).

This type of ‘homely’ tourism plays on the growing interest for rural tourism, looking for the ‘authentic’ by giving up on resorts and luxurious hotels for simpler accommodation; one that brings promises of experiencing old ways of life. Promises of access to the inner-life of the village, a ‘staged authenticity’ (MacCannell, 1999) that recreates a homely environment are accompanied by the exoticism of the Old Believers food and witnessing different cultural and religious activities. Consuming ethnicity is perceived as a means of offering some ‘added value’ for the curious anthropological gaze (Urry and Larsen, 2011) of the tourist.

The imaginary presented in numerous instances by Romanian and foreign media is summed up perfectly by this Romanian agency’s blog post promoting the Danube Delta:

*Deși nu au venit de mult timp în Delta Dunării, lipovenii au devenit emblematici*

*pentru această zonă. Atunci când te gandești la Delta Dunării îți vin în fața ochilor imagini cu pelicani, lotci cătrănite, lipoveni cu bărbi albe și căsuțe frumoase, alb cu albastru, învelite cu stuf.*

[Although they have come not that long ago in the Danube Delta, the Lipovans have become emblematic for this area. When you think of the Danube Delta, you imagine pelicans, tarry [wooden boats] ‘*lotkas*’, Lipovans with white beards and beautiful houses, white and blue with reed roofs.] (Descoperă Delta Dunării, no date).

The narratives presented to tourists play on the exoticism of both nature and culture. The Old Believer fisherman with a long beard is a stereotype often promoted through media (chapter 5.2) and tourist brochures, albeit villages such as Jurilovca have lost most of their fishermen (according to one of my informants the count went from 500 to less than 50 fishermen). The spectacle of materiality, of the costumed people going to church is also portrayed:

*Jurilovca este cea mai mare comunitate de pescari din Tulcea, dar și un colț de Rai, unde drumețul obosit de drum se poate desfăta cu minunățiile naturii sau poate admira hainele viu colorate ale lipovenilor și chipurile bărbaților acoperite cu barbă.*

[Jurilovca is not only the largest community of fishermen in Tulcea but also a bit of heaven where the traveller tired by the trip can enjoy the wonders of nature, can admire the vivid clothes of Lipovans and the faces of men covered with beards.] (Iancu, 2015a).

As Bell *et al.* (2001, p. 13) noticed ‘the ubiquity of a distinctive shade of bright blue paint applied to the exteriors and interiors of houses, churches and on garden fences’ marks villages as predominantly formed by Old Believers. Old Believers play on such an imaginary to attract tourists. More and more people adopt this image now, the use of traditional costume, considered old-fashioned before, has been revitalised under the tourist ‘gaze’ (Urry and Larsen, 2011). Adams argued that in the remote location of Alor in Indonesia ‘tourism confers ethnic legitimacy’ and mapped a process where ethnic identity was reconstructed to attract tourists based on external projections. In Jurilovca, after a Romanian bought an Old Believer traditional house and turned it into a successful business in the area, generating not only tourists but also media attention, more people have embraced this formula, painting their houses with white and blue and reconsidering tearing down traditional adobe houses (figure 8.1 on p. 228). Before, these houses were considered a mark of poverty; people wanted modern materials and amenities, but with the development of touristic activities, they have become fashionable again. Some have even started building new adobe houses, instead of bricks and mortar ones.



**Figure 8.1 Old Believer house with reed roof**

Local informants explained how, prior to these new developments, the tendency was to replace the old with the modern:

*În ultimii ani au început să capete importanță elementele tradiționale, stuful să fie apreciat că are proprietăți diferite, menține căldura, dă și un aspect minunat și e în contrast cu celelalte*

[In the last years, traditional elements have gained importance, reed began to be appreciated as it has different properties, it preserves heat, offers a wonderful sight and it contrasts with the others].

Such efforts for retraditionalisation need to fight against years of neglect and different informants stressed the importance of examples such as the one presented above. Others advocated educating people on the value of such aesthetic choices. Another idea mentioned was offering such recommendations with building licences, yet the informant expressed doubt meaningful change can be enforced through legislation.

The activity of the local administration has had a significant impact on the community. Over the years I have visited this place the image of the village was reshaped. Various projects were developed to improve touristic facilities using European funds as well (Iorio and Corsale, 2010). Moreover, due to an active involvement of dedicated staff in the local authority and educated active locals, Jurilovca has entered different tourism competitions at national and international level. As such, in 2013 it received an EDEN title - 'European Destination of Excellence' - for accessible tourism (EDEN, 2013) and in 2015 a national title of 'Cultural Village of the Year' (Iancu, 2015c) based on the diversity of activities taking place during the year, including festivals and Old Believers rituals.

The touristic potential of the area had been significant for a long time; but the village was only perceived as a stopping point towards *Gura Portiței*, a strip of land separating a lake and the sea (similar to the Lithuanian Curonian Spit discussed by Kockel, 2013[2012]), a major touristic attraction in the area. Jurilovca offers a successful example of adapting a locality and reinvesting in tradition to encourage tourism. Different other localities have undergone similar processes, revalorising old architecture and offering spectacles of Old Believers for tourists, some more successful than others.

In other areas of the Delta, a different form of tourism has been promoted around an objectified symbol of the area, the '*lotka*'. This wooden boat was once the only means of transportation of Old Believer fishermen, taking them slowly and steadily across waters. Boat-building using wood is now only a memory as modern diesel-fuelled boats are used

by residents of the Danube Delta today, and in my discussion with inhabitants of the area they expressed their reluctance to use the old means of transportation. The '*lotka*' thus stands as a symbol of a disappearing way of life, enabling nostalgias (Boym, 2001) of a simpler life, lived in closer connection to nature. Ivan Patzaichin, the famous Old Believer athlete, mentioned in the previous chapter is the initiator of a new concept of tourism, and together with the public relations agency that represents him, the Ivan Patzaichin Association, has developed a touristic project and coined a new Romanian term to describe this experience '*pescaturism*' – literally translated as fishing tourism. The website that promotes this project explains:

You can share a day in the life of an authentic fishermen, along with them, in a fishermen village. Come visit a traditional fisherman household in Mila 23, and experience the unique culture and gastronomy, steadfastly considerate with the rich nature of the Danube Delta (Asociația Ivan Patzaichin, 2015).

This type of tourism is promoted as a slow, ecological form of tourism (Piturlea, 2015), meant to offer tourists the entertainment needed to hold them in the area for more than a couple of days. Different Old Believers heritage items and practices are employed in this game of authenticity offered to the keen tourist. Fishing, cooking the famous fish soup (chapter 7.6.2), being entertained with song, at times even by a choir dressed in traditional costume, sleeping in a traditional house, these are all elements that promise to nourish the tourist's search for authenticity and nostalgic moods. And if these elements are not enough, the tourist is then entertained with festivals.

#### **8.4 Festivals with Old Believer Representation**

Festivals have become established as a means of attracting audiences in different areas across the country, and Old Believers have an active participation in various events of this type. During a fieldwork session in the summer of 2015, I have had the opportunity to attend four such events, a sports festival, a city anniversary festival, a song festival as well as a food festival. However, this chapter also draws on media coverage and discussion with informants of other festivals in the area, similar to the ones I attended.

Although the themes of these events were different, there were some commonalities in the way Old Believer ethnicity was performed, as Kuutma contends:

A festival performance serves the purpose of the articulation of the group's heritage, it is a communicative situation actively engaging participants, presenting a combination of participation and performance in a public context (Kuutma, 1998, p. 79).



**Figure 8.2 Old Believers presentation tent during a festival in Tulcea**

The Old Believers' heritage expressed at festivals is chiefly presented in the form of folkloric performances of singing groups. Some festivals also include display booths 'drawing on traditional visual motifs, places and objects to assert contemporary legitimacy' (Silberman, 2012, p. 249). Such presentation booths (tents) were, for instance, observed at a festival attended in Tulcea city to commemorate the 'city day', an official celebration sometimes held on the day the patron saint of the city is celebrated (figure 8.2). Different ethnic groups were invited to present their folklore on stage. Apart from a full schedule of folkloric performances, the city hall, the organiser of the event, encouraged various ethnic groups to present culture through display booths and craftsmen to sell their products. These booths were adorned with traditional objects, magazines or presentation flyers and apart from Old Believers, Turks, Macedonians, Roma, and Ukrainians were also present. The Old Believer tent was the first in the row and it was adorned with different objects. Several '*rubashka*' shirts were pinned to the back of the tent and in a different corner a '*sarafan*' was hung for display. Objectified in several representative items, ethnicity was not only on display but also commodified for the curious visitor. Objects used in religious life were sold as commodities (Pratt, 2013), not only for their functional role, but also as souvenirs. Kerchiefs, '*poias*' were frequently seen in these booths. The Old Believers' tent was



accompanied by two life-size mannequins (man and woman) which, upon my asking, were presented as dressed in traditional clothing (figure 8.2, p. 231). Upon asking an entire narrative was presented: the ‘woman’ was dressed in a ‘*sarafan*’ with a long kerchief, wearing her hair in two braids as she was married, and her ‘husband’ was dressed in a silky ‘*rubashka*’ and a modern cap.

Several youngsters, dressed in choir clothing, were there for the beginning of the event and left soon after they took an official picture with the mayor. An interesting contradiction emerged when the mayor of the city came around handing diplomas to every group. The diplomas mentioned they were awarded for ‘promoting Romanian values’. There was no acknowledgement that these groups of different ethnicities were representing their own, rather than Romanian, culture. Given that many display tents belonged to Romanians, it could either be interpreted as an oversight, or a deliberate attempt to emphasise that although these groups were of different ethnicities, everyone was a Romanian citizen, a statement of inclusion. Although I did not have the opportunity to discuss the reasoning for this choice with anyone, in either interpretation I contend this oversight highlights the limits of multiculturalism. Commenting on the development of ethnic tourism in Singapore Henderson (2003, p. 29) argued: ‘in building the nation, the government has endeavoured to construct an overarching national identity based on multiculturalism, but within which ethnic loyalties are subsumed’. In a similar manner, Nic Craith (2008, p. 62) discussed such diversity strategies in Europe as an ‘appropriation of power to the centre – as if ‘Europe’s “mosaic of cultures” was but a multiplicity of smaller units in a greater European design’. The same case seems to be at play here as well. The duality of belonging expressed by Old Believers, feeling both Romanian and Russian (Clopot, 2016a), seems to point towards a tacit acceptance of the status quo under the celebration of the multicultural fabric of the city.

In the festivals observed during the summer of 2015 and beyond, it seemed that different Old Believer groups created a similar visual narrative. The recourse to tradition was made through displaying items of clothing as decorations. Moreover, such displays regularly featured the old ‘*samovar*’ as well as ‘*matroshka*’ dolls, all symbols of Russianness (chapter 7). Another example is that of a sporting event, Rowmania, a major festival taking place annually in Tulcea city, organised by the Ivan Patzaichin Association (also discussed in section 8.3 and chapter 7.7). The festival is part of a range of activities that are meant to raise the profile of the area and attract tourists. The festival includes different competitions

such as rowing, running or swimming and is correlated with another international event, the Tour International Danubien (TID), which sees people from different countries of the world row the course of the Danube from Germany to the Delta in canoes or kayaks. These are complemented with a series of other elements that feature Old Believers as well. A stage is included which is dedicated to folkloric performances during the day, and modern Romanian Pop music by night. Moreover, display booths include local craftsmen and represent villages in the area, and these activities are both meant to encourage the local economy and to entice visitors to visit these locations. The year I attended, the different villages included were also presented through a parade (figure 8.3 on p. 233). In these events, ethnicity is often expressed through the use of traditional clothing (Kuutma, 1996) which enhances the performance for the viewer and has effects at community level:

The created communicative situation reflects shared experience of the group, promotes social revitalization, and celebrates ethnic identity in the context of cultural expression (Kuutma, 1998, p. 86).



**Figure 8.3 Parade during Rowmania festival**

The celebration of ethnicity is commonplace not only at Romania but also at other festivals and the use of traditional clothing is common: 'in an attempt to attract more tourists, performers have to dress the part by abandoning everyday clothes and donning costumes of the past' (Yang, 2011, p. 563). The same process was at play in these festivals. In several instances, people I had met in modern clothing before were dressed in different clothing during such events, proud of the exotic allure of their clothing, presented as traditional (figure 8.4 on p. 235). Sometimes they had to endure more than 40-degrees temperatures in their long dresses and although complaining to the team of unbearable warmth, they smiled and happily discussed the costume with visitors. The same was true for the next festival discussed that took place shortly after.

The third festival considered here was aimed at drawing tourists through gastronomy. Food plays an important part in festivals (Stoeltje, 1992) and it is not surprising that it was often incorporated in such events. In the autumn of 2015, I had the opportunity to participate first as a visitor and then as a team member at an event in a small touristic village in south-east Romania. Organised for tourists mainly, the event takes place for two days every autumn:

*Cu acest festival al Borșului de pește ne aflăm la a patra ediție, de la an la an am avut succes, vrem să demonstrăm turiștilor străini și comunității în general iubitoare de sporturi nautice și de turism din acesta mai special, eco, ca se poate și în felul acesta să dăm un semnal puternic pentru toți cei care doresc să viziteze Delta și să se bucure de sufletul nostru românesc primitiv și de bucătăria noastră tradițională de care noi știm că e minunată dar trebuie să afle și alții.*

[With this festival of Fish Borscht, more successful from year to year, we want to demonstrate to foreign tourists and in general to the general community which loves nautical sports and this type of eco-tourism, that it is possible, and this way send a powerful signal for everyone who wants to visit the Delta and enjoy the welcoming Romanian soul and our traditional cuisine which we know is wonderful but others need to find out also.] (TVR+, 2016c).

Several villages from the area send teams of cooks that prepare food on the spot and sell it to tourists and locals. The highlight of the festival is a fish soup competition, each team has a designated recipe, judged by food critics as well as journalists. The offer for tourists extends beyond the culinary experience, an ad-hoc bar is set up as well a stage that offers continuous entertainment during the two days. The various groups and singers entertain audiences with some modern, but mostly folkloric performances. This concept is similar to other festivals taking place in the area in various villages and some competition exists between the different offerings.



**Figure 8.4 Booth during the Borscht Festival in the Danube Delta**

The main element of these gastronomic events is the fish soup (figure 8.5 on p. 236), following a recipe that is attributed to Old Believers, as mentioned in chapter 7. While cooking is usually a woman's occupation, the fish soup is considered a man's job. In local stories this type of soup was prepared far away from any kitchen, during the fishing trip, on the shore, with an improvised fire, using water from the Danube.



**Figure 8.5 Fish Borscht soup prepared during the festival competition**

During the festival observed, the offer was varied and included both modern dishes (similar to the British fish and chips) as well as local delicacies such as roe salads, fish meatballs or frog legs, different types of pies and cakes. These were meant to be enjoyed in the area as benches and tables were temporary set close-by. The producers proudly described these products as very healthy, in their presentations they emphasised the freshness of fish sourced locally.

Recourse to ethnicity was made in several booths from the villages that had significant population of Old Believers using the same elements mentioned above, as well as examples of local crafts. The event was attended both by the local community as well as tourists brought by the daily boat that links the village to the nearest city. The attendance of the festival was high when I attended in 2015 and further increased later, as media coverage of the 2016 event mentions that the entire accommodation capacity in the area was taken, with



tourists accommodated in the surrounding villages as well, a sign that the festival has grown (TVR+, 2016c).

Another festival that my fieldwork planning did not allow me to attend takes place yearly in Jurilovca, some discussing the two as being in competition. I have, however, had the opportunity to discuss it with various local sources as well as follow its development on Facebook and media. One of the presentation articles mentioned that:

*Evenimentul celebrează tradițiile gastronomice și culturale din Jurilovca și Delta Dunării, oferind participanților posibilitatea de a descoperi savoarea preparatelor locale, originalitatea obiceiurilor și frumusețea spiritului multiethnic al Dobrogei.*

[The event celebrates culinary and cultural traditions from Jurilovca and the Danube Delta, offering participants the opportunity to discover the flavour of local dishes, the originality of customs and the beauty of the multicultural soul of Dobrudja.] (Fustanela, 2015).

This festival recipe was also copied by others in the area and the number of festivals of this type seems to grow from year to year.

## **8.5 Folkloric Performances**

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, every Saturday during the tourist season, a small choir entertains tourists with song and dance at *Gura Portiței* (figure 8.6 on p. 238). Recourse to Old Believers' cultural inheritance is often made and 'tradition serves as a reservoir in which one searches for artistic elements and aesthetic features that address cultural and ethnic identities' (Kuutma and Kāstik, 2014, p. 285). Introducing another Old Believer choir at a festival I attended, the presenter said:

*Respectul și fascinația pentru valorile și specificul rușilor lipoveni au fost integrate în cântecele și dansurile ansamblului artistic, promovând pe scenele evenimentelor la care participă comunitatea din [...] dar și spiritul total aparte al Deltei Dunării. Pe lângă aceasta, ansamblul [...] promovează și costumele tradiționale purtate și astăzi cu mare respect în zilele de sărbătoare atât de reprezentativ pentru stilul de viață dar și pentru spiritualitatea rușilor lipoveni din Dobrogea.*

[The respect and fascination for the values and particularity of Lipovan Russians were integrated in the songs and dances of the artistic group, promoting on the stages of events they take part in the community from [...] and the unique spirit of the Danube Delta. Moreover, the group [...] promotes the traditional costume still worn today with great respect on holidays, so representative of the lifestyle and the spirituality of Lipovan Russians in Dobrudja].

The name of the locality and the group was removed in this quote as this way of presentation stands to represent the different other groups as well.



**Figure 8.6 Old Believer singing group in a restaurant**

On another occasion, reporting on the participation of a singing group to a festival an Old Believer journalist noted that the group promotes ‘*vioiciunea, spiritul liber al rușilor lipoveni, moștenit și păstrat din moși strămoși*’ [the liveliness, the free spirit of Lipovan Russian, inherited and preserved from forefathers] (Anore, 2009b, p. 3). The idea of inheriting and transmitting tradition was often emphasised in my discussion with different choir members across the country:

*Noi avem o doamnă în grup, îi spunem Teleenciclopedia<sup>49</sup>, e trecută de 60 de ani, dar ea din tinerețe a cântat și a preluat de la cei bătrâni. Deci oricum transmitem din generație în generație aceste cântece tradiționale, cântece locale, care aparțin zonei.*

[We have this lady in the group, we call her Teleenciclopedia, she is older than 60, from youth she has sang and took over from the elders. Thus, we pass anyway on from generation to generation these traditional songs, local songs that belong to the area].

To promote their Russianness such choir groups chose Russian names and created special costumes, sometimes using subsidies from the CRLR. Membership, albeit labelled as Lipovan, seems to be open to others as well, and some of the choir groups have Romanian members as well. Although most of the choir groups encountered have a short history, one of the choir groups I met claimed to be the oldest in the country, with a history going back to 1978, when they were asked to sing during the annual national festival ‘*Cântarea României*’ [Song of Romania] which promoted state-approved folkloric performances. Commenting on the many groups that exist today a woman said ‘*acum au apărut ca ciupercile după ploaie*’ [now they have appeared as mushrooms after the rain]. Indeed, most Old Believers villages and cities have at least one local singing group, if not a couple. Following Bauman (2012, p. 102), the politics of performance are revealed by ‘the ways in which these aspects of power are claimed, allocated, authorized, negotiated, contested’ and in some instances manifestations of such power relations happened in front of me. In some of the groups observed during fieldwork there were clashes which resulted from differences in vision for the group’s aims or the choice of repertoires. One informant observed that in some villages clashes have political reasons, each group being connected to a local party or the other: ‘*totul se cumpără acum, numai bani, numai mârлănii*’ [everything can be bought now, only money, only crassness]. Concessions of this sort are seen as adaptations to survive as accepting adherence to a party ensures presence to political events and thus brings opportunities to gain more money.

One such adaptation that I noticed repeatedly was that many groups across the country

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<sup>49</sup> Teleenciclopedia is a show on the national television that has run for more than 50 years, composed of short documentaries representing a wide variety of topics related to nature, technology, culture or history. The nickname suggests the idea of extended knowledge.



present the same repertoire of Russian music, with popular songs such as ‘*Katiusha*’ or ‘*Casatschok*’, that are not particular to Old Believers. As an Old Believer woman declared to the media:

*Acum, selecția melodiilor este făcută cu atenție, oamenii cântă în funcție de mediul în care se află și de dispoziția ascultătorilor. Spre exemplu, pe străzile din București au chiuut și-au fost fericite, au zis allegro și-au ales ritm care fură zâmbete. Alteori, știu să cânte la ureche tot amarul din viața asta. ‘Sunt foarte multe melodii, dar alea mai lente, mai triste, mai de viață, mai de nu-știu-ce, alea sunt numai pentru cine înțelege. Cine-nțelege cuvintele și sensul melodiei, ăluia-i place. Altfel e prea monotonă, lentă’.*

[Now the selection of songs is carefully made, people sing based on the environment in which they find themselves and the mood of the audience. For example, on Bucharest streets they shouted and were happy, they said allegro and they chose a rhythm that steals smiles. Other times, they knew how to sing close to the ear the entire bitterness of this life. ‘There are a lot of songs, but the slow ones, sadder, life songs and others, those are for those who understand. Those who understand the lyrics and the sense of the song, they like the songs. Otherwise they are too monotonous, too slow.’] (Ungureanu, 2013).

Differences between groups are erased by these choices and often the distinctiveness of one choir group from another comes from dress rather than choice of repertoire. With lively rhythms, these songs entertain audiences, yet they contrast with the Old Believers’ folklore which has many melancholic songs. As it was the case for Seto groups in Estonia, singing is viewed as ‘an epitome of cultural heritage’ (Kuutma and Kästik, 2014, p. 230) by Old Believers as well. Given that for many of these groups the declared aim is to carry tradition forward, and narratives emphasise their authenticity, on one occasion these repertoire choices even prompted a debate in the backstage when one member of a choir asked the leader ‘*Dar ce noi cântăm să fie vesel sau să ducem tradiția mai departe?*’ [Are we singing to entertain or to carry tradition forward?]. In this instance, the choir leaders and performers seemed to lean towards the latter. Another informant commented that this was a result of being well-received by the audience, of being offered money as opposed to singing for their own enjoyment. Sometimes these commitments, based on secular understandings, go

against old values: *‘în post nu se cântă, dar din moment ce ai contract închizi ochii și mergi mai departe, că așa s-au ajuns vremurile noastre’* [there is no singing during fasting, but if you have a contract you close your eyes and go forward, that is how our times have become]. Due to this mismatch, a group member explained, they had lost singers as they were not willing to forego the fasting ban on singing (chapter 4.4).

The ‘tourismification’ (Salazar, 2009) processes observed by Salazar for the Maasai people are at play here as well as ‘the image of the thing replaces the thing itself’ (AlSayyad, 2007, p. 163). A moment when AlSayyad’s commentary, although presented in another setting, seemed all too fitting was when the choir I observed sang a lively tune and at one point translated the words in Romanian as well, so that tourists would also understand the lyrics. In various discussions with informants, it was commonplace to hear regretful thoughts over the lost pace of life where song was a common occurrence in daily life. Several informants melancholically recounted how people met on lazy Sunday afternoons in small groups, spending their hours enjoying drinks, pastries and singing. A ‘plastic’ metaphor the informant offered was that of the apparition of Dallas<sup>50</sup> (Gross, 2004) and how the broadcasting of the first Western television series had changed the fabric of life. Heritagisation has transformed singing from an organic ad-hoc individual process to a staged performance, and similar to Kuutma’s analysis where Seto leeloo has become set as a group performance, ‘today the prominent spotlight of public awareness shines more on a choir as a collective performer’ (2012, p. 4). The Seto leeloo had been included on the UNESCO intangible heritage list in 2009 and since then the practice has grown in popularity. As Kuutma shows, however, the nomination has brought changes in the manner the tradition is held, an unintended consequence of the nomination process (Foster, 2015). The fixation in Kuutma’s example has essentially come from branding Seto song as official UNESCO heritage, yet for Old Believers the process is played on a smaller scale. Displaced from ritual, these performances ‘partake of theater, having been severed from their local social and ceremonial settings’ (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, p. 65). The link with the rich body of folklore is weakened, as the process is selective and only some songs are deemed worthy.

Often people explained that many songs are lost and declared their unrealised intentions to collect songs from elder Old Believers before they die. Meanwhile it is, however, this form

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<sup>50</sup> Dallas was the first American series to be presented in Romania and its appearance after the Revolution is still remembered by people today as a significant cultural event.

of singing for uninformed audiences in restaurants, bars or at festivals that prevails.

## 8.6 The Shadowy Side of Tourism

The global and the local interact in complex ways and the relationship between tourism and heritage highlights at times social and cultural change (Ivan, 2017). Cornish (2015, p. 632) commented that today:

continuity and tradition are played out in front of global audiences, towards re-situating the politics of place and belonging, as festivals both model and mirror social practice and meaning making.

Claims to continuity to promote local belonging, and with issues of authenticity raised by such performance raise thought-provoking questions. One such question is who does this tradition belong to? In some of the festivals Old Believers, Bulgarians and Romanians came together to represent the local village rather than certain separate ethnicities, although the heritage emphasised was that of Old Believers. In these efforts to represent traditionalism the line between what pertains to the Old Believers uniquely is sometimes blurred as ‘the reflexive layerings and multiple borrowings have, by now, surely become so complex that we cannot easily assign ownership’ (Macdonald, 1997, p. 175). In the same manner, drawing the line between what is local rather than specifically Old Believer architecture are not as easily traced, even though the narrative presented to tourists emphasises authenticity and difference.

Moreover, the encounter between tourist and Old Believer groups and the commodification of objectified elements of culture seem to influence and even at times alter the community’s way of life. The nostalgia of what is lost prevails and the melancholy of losing traditions is commonplace as one informant exclaimed:

*Acu ar trebui depuse eforturi să se conserve măcar o felie pentru ca în 10 ani să o prezentăm cum sunt evenimentele ălea în cetățile medievale, să fie muzică medievală, gătit cum se gătea, haine*

[Now we should make efforts to conserve at least a slice so that in the next 10 years to present it the way events are organised in medieval cities, with medieval music, cooking as they once cooked, clothes].

The external gaze at times drives retraditionalisation processes and re-valuation of ethnic heritage. On the other hand, the attention of external audience transforms singing from an organic process to a staged heavily-edited display of ethnicity. Commenting on the processes driven by increasing touristic attention, another informant said:

*Pe partea asta de turism o să vină cu dezavantaje, nu aş vrea să opresc că e nevoie de dezvoltare, mi-este teamă de un singur lucru, să nu ajungem să ne uităm la lucrurile noastre doar în muzeu.*

[In this respect, tourism will bring some disadvantages, but I would not want to stop it as there is a need for development, I am afraid of one thing only, that we might end up looking at our things only in a museum.].

This informant's quote echoes Kirsheblatt-Gimblett's (1995, p. 369) comments of heritage as 'the outmoded' where development and association with tourism displaces the fabric of the local. In this process, the living cultural life is disrupted to such an extent that it needs to be replaced with representation. And some of the tendencies discussed in this chapter seem to advance this possibility.

Moreover, limits to touristic activity are due to internal politics or mistrust. Aidarov (2016) noted a reticence of Old Believers in Estonia to open worship houses to visitors and I have encountered the same reticence in Romania. While in some villages people are used to tourists taking pictures from the outside, they are reluctant to open the church to visitors due to potential thefts and to purity rules. The same reticence was met for registering churches as national monuments, as careful regulation would render any alterations difficult. Yet, during fieldwork I questioned the reticence to at least register some of these churches as national heritage when visiting a very Old abandoned church that, due to an administration issue, was crumbling under the forces of nature and lack of care. The villagers had no money for restoration, and the centuries-old beautiful paintings were continuously deteriorating. Ownership issues were raised as the church wrongly belonged to the Romanian Orthodox Church, and the Old Believers did not want to take any action before the building was reclaimed.

## **8.7 Conclusion**

The last chapter of analysis in this thesis made reference to all previous sets of data discussed across chapters 5-7. First, a discussion of the influence of media representations on both tourists' and Old Believers perceptions and actions was considered. The changes encountered in some communities that, eager to find alternative economic activities, have valorised the exotism of Old Believer heritage, traditions and materiality to expand the touristic offer were also analysed here. The rise of culinary events and festivals of different types was also part of this analysis, as opportunities to entertain tourists and to strengthen community bonds. The negative effects of tourism took a considerable part of this chapter as well, from the 'tourismification' noticed in several instances, to the adaptation of age-old practices such as singing to please audiences, as well as the commodification of heritage items. The chapter, in a sense leans towards the latter negative side and argues for a more balanced representation of heritage within touristic activities. In logical sequence then the last chapter of the thesis will bring the various ideas espoused in the chapters together in a conclusion.

## 9. Conclusion

As outlined at the beginning of the thesis, this study set out to analyse the heritage processes of Old Believers in Romania and, in the course of this examination, reflect on the future prospects of the community. From the outset, it posited a pattern of resisting change intrinsic to the beginnings of Old Belief, as shown by its roots in the Schism of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (chapter 1). In many senses, the 17<sup>th</sup> century ideas (Morris, 1990) which researchers had documented, are closely guarded and are incompatible with life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The study sought to analyse the manner in which such a long-standing inheritance is preserved and used today. It thus aimed to consider whether the processes observed in Romania ensure or endanger the sustainability of Old Believer heritage. Postulating an open definition of heritage and tradition (chapter 2), the study has considered their manifestations in various instances of Old Believers' lives. In each case, the changes reflected in fieldwork data were considered in parallel with informants' narratives that emphasised continuity and authenticity.

The overarching question addressed here (what role does heritage play in Old Believers' way of life?) has led to an analysis of the way heritage is entrenched in day-to-day activities. In a sense, the overall thesis addressed this question as it showed that both spiritual and secular heritage and traditions are embedded in regular activities and add to community-building and to identity-work. Moreover, it outlined the main heritage narrative of Old Believers that focuses on the duty they have towards their ancestors to preserve heritage. This main question was further layered in a subset of more specialised queries, addressed in dedicated chapters.

The first secondary question (1.a. How distinctive is Old Believers' heritage?) led to an analysis of authenticity. There is no dedicated single chapter that considers this topic, the theme is streamlined across all chapters instead. To address this question, a relativist notion of authenticity was employed, where the claims to distinctiveness are not considered in absolute terms, but rather in their contextual understandings that illuminate certain claims. Such claims were found to fuel heritage politics through arguments that position Old Believers as veritable Russians that have kept 'untainted' the traditions brought by ancestors. For those who acknowledge change, such preservation efforts are infused with nostalgia. Recurrent field interactions have signalled a sense of loss. Old Believers' discourses emphasise that, whereas traditions have carefully been passed across generations in the past, this process is more vulnerable today. Some ideas about the future

of the Old Believers can be deduced from the tendencies observed for younger generations. As Hall (1999, p. 12) writes:

Unless the younger generation has access to these cultural repertoires and can understand and practice them, to some extent at least, from the inside, they will lack the resources — the cultural capital — of their own ‘heritage’, as a base from which to engage other traditions.

In a similar vein, Old Believers youngsters, living in today’s complex environment, lack engagement with their cultural inheritance.

Furthermore, the study registered a duality of belonging, to Romania and Russia, which I have interpreted elsewhere through liminality (Clopot, 2016a). The Old Believers’ connection with their homeland perpetuates a sense of longing for a country that many have never seen, a mythical projection that grounds identities in the third-space of duality (Bhabha, 1994). Nostalgia, as Boym (2001, p. 252) contended, opens an unrequited but productive emotional void: ‘diasporic intimacy is dystopic by definition; it is rooted in the suspicion of a single home, in shared longing without belonging’. This longing is objectified in different forms, sometimes leading to a monoglossic voice pushing forward established forms of articulating belonging. As a result, orthodox ways of showcasing ethnic identity have been developed over time (Nagel, 1994). These were discussed with reference to different topics such as intangible and material culture, as well as representations in museum settings or performances for tourists.

The findings charted in the previous chapters paint a complex picture of heritage processes that is aligned with the beginning of the thesis, outlining Old Believers’ adaptability and the creativity discussed by various researchers (Crummey, 1970; Fenoghen, 2009). This adaptability is challenged nowadays by major processes such as migration and a growing trend of inter-ethnic marriages. These reflections fuel romanticised ponderings over a past when relative isolation from the rest of the Romanian population ensured the strength of traditions and the coherence of transmission processes. In this respect, the study brings to the fore disquieting patterns, whereby a dichotomous understanding of modernity/tradition leads people to turn away from age-old practices, such as in the case of traditional costume (chapter 7) or language learning (chapter 6.3).

The analysis of intangible heritage (question 1.b. - What intangible heritage do Old Believers preserve and how?) revealed the plentiful presence of ICH (manifested through different traditions such as rituals or the practice of crafts) which exhibit both positive and negative changes. Unlike the closed community of Oregonian Old Believers (Dolitsky' and Kuz'mina, 1986; Razumovskaya, 2008), that rejects technology, Romanian Old Believers embrace the latest technologies, from television to social media, and this openness brings significant change into the community. This change at times results in positive developments, such as the changing tradition of iconography that was exclusively masculine and that has recently been expanded to include women (Clopot and Nic Craith, forthcoming). At the other end of the spectrum, however, change is limited and patriarchal gender roles are still projected forward, such as in the case of allowing women to read during religious services in different areas of the country.

In response to question 1.c. (is the Russian language part of Old Believers' intangible heritage and if so, how is it integrated in everyday life?), the thesis argued for a positive answer and highlighted the two languages' (Slavonic and Lipovan Russian) vulnerable position. First, Slavonic linguistic skills necessary for religious practice are harder and harder to pass forward to the next generation, suggesting a crisis of transmission similar to that outlined by Naumescu (2010; 2011). This is correlated with the crisis of transmission of the Lipovan language as well, the specific dialect of Russian transmitted orally across time, unlikely to survive much longer as in educational settings younger people acquire modern Russian rather than the antiquated form spoken by elders. As it can offer political advantages and emphasise connection with Russian, top-down views emphasise the development of the former.

The intangible cultural expressions are inter-connected with their material counterparts (as discussed in chapter 2.2) and question 1.d. (how is tangible heritage used in day to day life and what narratives are generated around such objects?) provided an analysis centred on the later. Whereas focused on the physical, the analysis of materiality led to considerations of immaterial nature, of values and meanings invested in objects. The analysis of tangibility proposed here emphasised change as well, pointing towards adaptation through the use of modern materials as well as shifts of meanings. The narratives around materiality registered showed how such items had become purveyors of genuineness, fuelling ethnic identity claims.



The second part of this thesis was focused on representation, in answer to the second overarching question (how is Old Believers' heritage represented?). It highlighted discrepancies between insider and outsider images and the effects that such misrepresentations generate. First, a binary secondary question<sup>51</sup> led to comparing and contrasting inner- and outer- representations in the media (chapter 5). This analysis of media representations underlined a series of inter-related issues. The marginal position of Old Believers in society was reflected in the limited exposure in national media, especially privately-owned channels. Although specific legislation exists that supports the development of ethnic media and the representation of the community in national media, its reach is limited as the market is dominated by private companies that are outside the legislation's reach. It has furthermore exposed the opportunities brought by ethnic media, which facilitates the creation of a voice for the community, but also its shortcomings, as it can sometimes generate hegemonic views. In addition, the analysis reflected on passing traditions, on the difficulties of language preservation and on tourism, thus connecting with all the other chapters of analysis. It has, moreover, evidenced the triviality and exoticism that drives mainstream media accounts, often resulting in stereotypical representation and the responses these superficial images have generated.

The subsequent secondary question<sup>52</sup> discussed representation in a binary formula again, this time in connection to official collections (chapter 7, sections 4-8). The representation of Old Believers' heritage in museum settings has evidenced a limited ability to influence outsiders' exhibitions, where stereotypical representations find their way in displays. Some of these displays feed a nostalgic longing for the simple life of the past objectified in collections included in different types of museums, such as open-air or ethnographic museums. The limited representation of difference in museums has been considered as well, given the museum's original aim to present a national story. In view of Old Believers' preoccupation with dying traditions, the absence of an insider's museum was portrayed as a shortcoming.

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<sup>51</sup> Question 2.a. - How do Old Believers represent themselves in the media? How are they represented?

<sup>52</sup> Question 2.b. - 'How is heritage represented in exhibition settings (museums)? Are there differences between representations of Old Believers in official museums versus exhibitions organised by community members?'

Reflecting on the question related to the use of heritage as a resource<sup>53</sup> in touristic activities brings to the fore complex processes, where the ‘tourismification’ (Salazar, 2009) discussed in chapter 8 is present. The exotic ‘Other’ at home is often portrayed in national media to draw tourists’ attention. In return, Old Believers respond by emphasising their Old Believrness which sometimes results in renewed interest in their inheritance. At times, Old Believer resources are used by Romanians who pose as Lipovans, dressing in traditional dress, or using traditional houses in their activities. Moreover, in areas with important archaeological vestiges, heritage resources are combined with living traditions to offer tourists a complex package. As Kockel (2007b, p. 27) cautioned, ‘the fixation of some aspects of tradition for purposes outside the sphere of everyday life, for example through projects to promote tourism, may ultimately have alienating effects’ and some of these effects are discussed in chapter 8 as well. The commodification of heritage and the use of traditions in events such as festivals reveals another dimension signalled by researchers, where culture is objectified through stereotypical Russian symbols such as the ‘*matroshka*’ or the ‘*samovar*’. Likewise, the increasing external attention for traditional singing groups produces shifts in their repertoire, which in a sense become stereotypical themselves. It also changes practices from living traditions to stage representations where people ‘become living signs of themselves’ (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, p. 377). Another concern raised, paired with discussions of disappearing traditions, is that increased outsider attention and changes for accommodating tourism could lead to the obliteration of traditional cultural expressions.

In its discussion of globalisation, the study echoes Labadi’s (2010, p. 8) argument that it

should not be considered as a negative and threatening unilateral process but rather as a multidimensional one, which leads to the creation of new, hybridised forms of cultural diversity.

The complexity of this layered process can lead to positive results as well, such as the reconsideration of gender roles mentioned above (Clopot and Nic Craith, forthcoming). A danger, however, is represented by some of the tendencies noted, where the religious core is losing currency and living traditions shift more and more to meta-cultural productions.

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<sup>53</sup> Question 2.c. – ‘How is heritage used for touristic purposes? Does touristic activity influence heritage processes?’

Increasing connections with other cultures could also lead to ever-more complex associations and hybridity in the future.

The lack of systematised heritage intervention, from the community or from outside organisations, has resulted in a neglect of some heritage items, such as centuries-old books hidden in the houses of people or abandoned churches that are continuously deteriorating. At times this results from a lack of understanding of the value of such items. Other times it is simply a result of a lack of support from appropriate forums or a reluctance to register such items in a registry for fear of lack of control over subsequent maintenance. Whereas state cultural funds that are dedicated to advancing cultural objectives exist, they are limited in impact, as they can only be administered only by official representatives. There is, as well, a limited power to influence national heritage politics agendas (chapter 1.4), linked with the marginal position of ethnic groups in the state. In the Estonian case, Aidarov (2006) considered enlisting Old Believer culture with UNESCO might trigger positive change for their preservation efforts. The same can be said for Romanian Old Believers. Listing Old Believers' cultural space in the ICH Convention, for instance, might advance the preservation agenda. However, given the marginal position of the ethnic group and its decreasing population, it is unlikely that Old Believers might influence national heritage processes to such an extent.

At community level, the analysis of every question raised in this thesis, has also considered the revitalisation efforts from the centre and the relative success these have registered. Internal coherence problems create further impediments in advancing the safeguarding agenda and the centre-margin tensions limit the scope of interventions. These include differences in views between the institutionalised voice of Old Believers and smaller localised ones, as well a concentration of efforts in the south-eastern part of the country. Moreover, the limited engagement of priestless communities is a further point which enhances internal problems and occludes heteroglossic heritage claims (Kuutma, 2012).

As discussed at the beginning of this thesis, the original intention was to assess the sustainability of heritage practices as well the questions addressed above. Whereas the data presented here offers some patterns that can be considered in such an analysis, it also raises further questions about the future sustainability of this heritage (chapter 1). As such, a dedicated follow-up study could usefully build on the patterns observed here to analyse additional data and address this topic. There are other various ways in which this study can be taken forward derived from data that was not considered here. During the course of this

project, I have had the opportunity to visit one of the Old Believers' villages in Estonia, a visit that has opened a rich cross-comparative dimension, as the visit revealed both commonalities and differences that enticed my curiosity. Given the geographical spread of Old Believers, a project of this sort needs to be considered carefully, with targeted case studies that would ensure a coherent use of resources, including considerations whether such a study should include Russia as well. A further area of development, mentioned in one of the earlier chapters, could be based on the incremental growth of digital data on Old Believers, including the rich social media activity across the country. Most religious services and significant events are recorded with mobile phones, pictures and videos from different events are regularly uploaded online in Romania. An interesting enquiry would be to consider the effects of such digital media use on their safeguarding activities.

As the data here shows, overall, the study has fulfilled its stated objective, to contribute to the rich corpus of Old Believer studies and to extend the knowledge of Romanian Old Believers. Its key strength is the interpretation from an emic perspective, thus reflecting in the original intention of engaging marginalised voices to speak against the perpetuation of stereotypes. Understanding such communities holds the potential to bridge difference and to increase tolerance towards these 'strangers' (Bauman, 1995) engaged in perpetuating diasporic connections and fuelling multiple nostalgic feelings.

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